

BUFFALO

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*The Lone Trail of a
Big Game Hunter*

by

CONYERS LANG

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CONTENTS

| CHAPTER | PAGE |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION | vii |
| I SUNRISE | I |
| II CAPE PROVINCE | 21 |
| III THE TRANSKEI | 30 |
| IV WHALING | 44 |
| V MALAMALA | 61 |
| VI LIONS | 79 |
| VII BUFFALO | 92 |
| VIII A PIECE OF ENGLAND | 104 |
| IX NORTHERN RHODESIA | 113 |
| X KAFUE RIVER | 130 |
| XI CHAMBESI RIVER | 144 |
| XII ABERCORN AND LAKE TANGANYIKA | 157 |
| XIII LAKE RUKWA | 164 |
| XIV SONGWE DELTA | 195 |
| XV TANGANYIKA TERRITORY | 209 |
| XVI NAIROBI | 213 |
| XVII KENYA | 221 |
| XVIII HELL'S GATE | 228 |
| XIX "TO EVERY MAN UPON THIS EARTH—" | 243 |
| XX GOOD SAMARITANS | 264 |
| XXI SUNDOWN | 272 |
| XXII BIG GAME SHOOTING | 295 |
| XXIII MOTORING | 304 |

INTRODUCTION

IN these days of long distance flights, speed records and mass publicity, adventure has become inseparable from spectacular achievement in the mind of the public. Often the sensation created by these undertakings is disproportionate to their risks. Speed seems to be the all important factor.

I always thought it would be more interesting to travel across a continent slowly, to study local conditions, to get to know the people, and learn their ways, and to take an interest in natural history and sport, rather than rush across it by air.

Imbued with this idea, I went to Cape Town, bought a motor-van, and decided to go on a long, lone Safari through Africa, using the car as a house when necessary.

Also, as an ambition, I set myself the task to arrive eventually at Cairo, and complete the journey on four wheels. I gave myself a year to do this, and set out knowing nothing about Africa, its roads, its climate, or its people.

I have written this book in the hope that it may prove of some assistance to other lovers of adventure, natural history and sport.

I am deeply indebted to the loyal help and guidance given me by Keith Ayling, without which the compilation could not have been accomplished.

CONYERS LANG.

WHITE'S. *November, 1933.*

CHAPTER I

Sunrise

A CHARACTER in the film "Cavalcade" asks repeatedly, "Where is Africa?" The reply, which never failed to draw roars of laughter was, "I'm not quite sure, but it's — hot." When I decided to go there my knowledge of the Dark Continent was fundamentally little more than that.

There was nothing to keep me in London, and the urge to travel was strong. So three days later, with a ticket and a few suit cases, guns and rifles, I found myself on the *Carnarvon Castle* heading south.

It was the first time I had been on a big ship. That in itself was a thrill, but one doubtless shared by many readers in these days of popular cruises. Once there, I began to reflect on that strange prompting of intuition that had suddenly driven me away from London. I wanted to hunt big game!

After dinner on the first night out, I began to formulate some plans, and in doing so, realised that I knew absolutely nothing about Africa. I had decided to see Africa in my own way. Particularly I wanted to study its natural history, rub shoulders with its people, and to get right under the skin of the country. I have always liked hunting, but the attraction of hunting dangerous game had suddenly become irresistible. Before I turned in that night I had made definite

plans to obtain close-up experience of every phase of sport that the country could offer. It appeared then quite a simple thing to buy a car in Capetown and drive it up through Africa on a long shooting trip with Cairo as the eventual goal. I may mention that nobody has ever accomplished this feat alone completely by car, although in my ignorance—I did not even know when the wet and dry seasons occurred or the result of the former on unmetalled roads—I imagined it would be quite an easy one.

Among my random thoughts I remembered that a friend with whom I discussed the prospect of going to Africa had said that I might just as well fly there as go by boat. That was exactly what I did not want to do.

Most of my fellow-passengers were South Africans returning from leave in the Mother Country. Chatting with them by night in the smoking-room I began to get acclimatised.

We left the Channel on a dreary April day. I had never been seasick before, but the thought of the dreaded Bay of Biscay lying ahead was not comforting. I was soon to be impressed by the serene comfort of a modern liner, and to be immensely cheered by the magical spirit of comradeship that pervades the entire passenger list. Everybody soon knew each other. Most of the South Africans were business men with pursuits entirely remote from my own. I found that I was the only would-be hunter on board. The others were concerned with the more unromantic and probably more exacting pastime of hunting bread-and-butter. Many of them assured me of a good time when they discovered I was going to hunt. Without exception, they all said I was mad, however, to consider driving a car from the Cape to Cairo. Cape to Cairo! How glibly that

phrase slips off the tongue in these days of aeroplane records and fast railway travel.

I found plenty to pack my hours on board ship. In particular there was one intriguing young man whose vitality tended to wear out the patience of everybody. He was beef and brawn personified. I only made his acquaintance some days out, but I learned that the ship had hardly cast her moorings before he set to work to exercise his superfluous energy on the gymnasium. A couple of days sufficed for him to put out of action almost every device designed to curb human energy and provide the exercise deemed necessary for one's health on these occasions. He also wore out the gym instructor by boxing with him incessantly at every possible opportunity the poor man could provide. Occasionally he inveigled one or two of the lustier passengers to try grips with him. When they failed him, he became at perpetual loggerheads with the ship itself, and would go round wrenching fittings off the doors and walls. This became so disturbing that the purser deemed it necessary to report the exploits of this young Samson to the Captain, who is as absolute as a feudal lord, even where the most exclusive passengers are concerned. He promptly threatened to put our young strong man into irons. The threat worked. No more stanchions were torn off, and for the rest of the voyage the young man engaged in gentler pursuits.

Madeira provided the first touch of colour to break the monotony of the grey horizon of the sea. The whole place was a riot of colour. I managed a few hours on shore to breathe the fragrance of wistaria, geraniums and lilac, and revel in the rich glory of the jackeranda trees in full bloom. Madeira is 4,000 feet of mountain terraced with white fronted, red tiled houses rising

out of a garland of flowers. Flowers grow everywhere; on the sides of the narrow roads, in the crevices of the walls which flank the winding paths.

I left this sunlit paradise with reluctance. The sun had already got into my blood. The Africans laughed when I told them. "You'll get plenty of sun with us," they said.

We had arrived at the Island at dawn. I observed for the first time a sunrise that was worth while. For years, I had been watching sunsets, and now suddenly came across this new phenomenon of nature, more beautiful than any sunset I had yet seen.

I began to make a hobby of sunrises after that. On one occasion, off Cape Verde, I saw a dawn unforgettably impressive. A singular hush came over everything. It seemed even to envelop that peculiar hiss of the bow of the ship steering its way through the sea. It was pitch dark. The surface of the water was like a pool of black glass, slashed here and there with patches of phosphorous as if someone had scratched the surface with a knife. Overhead the sky hung like a purple curtain, with the stars winking like diamonds in the subdued light of a theatre. Suddenly in the east came a streak of salmon colour light, as if a giant had torn a gap across the sky with his finger; and then another, so quickly that it might be missed by a sudden turn of the head. This colour spreads. The whole sea and sky for a moment are tinged as if with blood. It is impossible to distinguish the sea from the sky on the eastern horizon, and then while the ship is gliding silently on, the stars disappear as suddenly as if they had been switched off like electric light bulbs. Overhead the sky becomes blue, still faintly tinged



A Modern Monoplane



"Monoplane-like birds"

Albatross over the stern



"They never seem to move their wings"

Albatross following the wake

with salmon. Minutes pass, and it becomes bluer still, gradually lending its colour to the sea. The salmon tint disappears, and up comes the sun, rising across the horizon like a great red air balloon speeding to make an ascent on a height record. One goes back to one's cabin with a deep feeling of peace, beauty, and repose.

Passing Cape Verde I saw another dawn that was far from peaceful. In the place of that sudden glint of scarlet were great rolling banks of clouds—I was told it was a storm over the African coast. The clouds were fifty to a hundred miles away. Directly above the sky was clear, but the sea, instead of having that oily black surface, was fretted by frothy sea-horses. The stars disappeared as suddenly as before, and left not the usual ethereal blue, but only an intense darkness that gave one an impression of anger and turbulence.

I went below, awe-inspired by the glowering wrath of nature. I felt the day had woken with a liver.

Off Cape Verde I observed that the sea was literally alive with fish. Later, the graceful albatross took up their ceaseless pursuit of the liner. These birds, with their widely spanned wings, soaring and diving in the breeze, are a memorable sight. I spent several enjoyable hours photographing the albatross. These monoplane-like birds are past masters at gliding. They never seem to move their wings, and yet they perpetually wheel round the vessel in great circles, only pausing occasionally to alight on the water when refuse is thrown from the ship. Their wing spread is between eight to fourteen feet across. They follow ships up from the southern seas, but close to Capricorn, for some reason or other, they suddenly change over to a southern-bound ship, and fly

back again. They are never seen in the northern hemisphere.

Capetown provided me with another unforgettable sunrise. This time Nature's pyrotechnic display was assisted by the works of man. The sheer beauty of the scene was enough to make one gasp for breath. Table Mountain rises to one's right, a solid black chunk capped with a white bank of clouds—its tablecloth. Beneath twinkle a thousand lights, for the city never goes to sleep ; and suddenly from the east comes that awe-inspiring bank of blood red. Up comes the sun, out go the stars, the lights vanish, and there is the vivid new-born day. The effect of the stars and the lights vanishing simultaneously and revealing the township, and its variegated colouring shimmering in the morning light is magical.

The town itself is not impressive. It is very stuffy, nestling as it does almost at sea-level, overshadowed by the Table Mountain range. Many of the streets are exceedingly narrow.

The Cape Peninsula, Claremont, Hout Bay, and Muisenburgh are the residential parts. The Cape Peninsula especially contains many beautiful houses, mostly white-fronted and red-tiled, set in bright coloured gardens. The flowers attracted me immediately. There are scarlet poinsettia trees twenty feet in height, with flowers fifteen inches across. Larger than a dinner plate ! Their grandeur staggered me, especially when I considered my own pathetic attempts to grow those tiny trees to a height of a few feet with flowers a few inches across in the greenhouse at home.

The African garden is a riot of colour. Hibiscus, golden glory, bright gay bougainvilleas, and a great variety of flowering shrubs. It also harbours a great deal of dust. There is dust everywhere in

Africa, so much dust that sometimes I began to wonder how anything green and colourful could exist.

I spent about nine days at Claremont with a friend, and busied myself making arrangements for my tour. In this I obtained my first real taste of Africa. Nobody hurries. Nothing is urgent. Life is conducted in slow tempo. Listening once to the waste-pipe in the bathroom gurgling away, I was reminded of the peaceful progress of life under the tropic sun. This feeling, which increased as I went further away from the town, is one of the mysteries of Africa. I surmised perhaps that white civilisation has absorbed it from the natives. They never seem to worry about anything. It is consequent on the sunshine which soaks into one's bones.

I realised I had a lot to do. The car had to be bought. I had to collect the necessary clothes and provisions, and above all, to decide on the route I was going to take. Nobody knew much about the country which lay to the north. I asked various people the best route to go. They did not seem to care or know whether a place was a hundred or two hundred miles away. Everything was delightfully vague. More irritating than anything, was that if a man said he would be ready to do anything in half-an-hour, it generally meant that he would turn up two or three hours later, or perhaps even the next day.

During a few days spent meeting people in the clubs, I was determined not to be discouraged by this rather charming failing. Trying to glean useful information was as difficult as searching for the proverbial pin in a haystack. Nobody knew and nobody cared. Still I found a lot of amusing companionship.

I learnt one thing from everybody: I should

need an escort of boys. I was told it was impossible to go to Durban without one or two boys. However, I had made up my mind that I did not want to emburden myself with servants, so I left the matter over until I had bought a car.

It had been my original intention to use a vehicle of British make. I never got further than several enquiries. The people who were responsible for the sale of such cars were simply not interested in my undertaking, and certainly had not a suitable car available. If they knew anything about local conditions they were not willing to share their knowledge. I asked for information in vain.

A sympathetic acquaintance told me to try one of the American companies. I had hardly put my face inside the showroom before I was overwhelmed with help and useful advice, and shortly afterwards I emerged the purchaser of an ordinary light delivery Ford van. . . The salesman insisted on fitting one extra spring in front and behind without extra charge. I readily fell in with his suggestion that I should use the strongest available tyres—British. For spares I contented myself with a few plugs and condensers, and an extra coil. In addition to the usual tools that one would take on a normal tour, I added a strong rope, a spade, an entrenching tool, some wire netting, a flat piece of board, and a few sacks.

The next thing I had to get was a driving licence. You are not allowed on the roads of the Union until you have gone through a test. The principle is commendable. The licence costs thirty shillings. I duly presented myself at the licensing office. A somnolent official indicated to me a row of equally somnolent individuals, and gave me to understand that one of them would test my proficiency. I selected an old man with a kind

face. His fee for undertaking the test was ten shillings.

"Have you ever driven a car?" he asked, taking one hand out of his pocket. I answered in the affirmative. "Which is your car?" he enquired. I pointed out the vehicle parked against the kerbstone. "All right," he said, "let's see you drive it."

Having hardly driven this make of car at all, I got in, feeling a little nervous. By some strange prank of fate I put the gear into reverse. My foot slipped off the clutch, and before I could do anything about it the car had bucked over the kerbstone, its tailboard almost in the shop window. I applied all the brakes wildly and fortunately came to a jerky stop before any damage was done. With the gear in its proper position, I brought the car back on to the road and looked at my taskmaster a little shamefacedly. I felt that I had not come through the test with flying colours. Realising how vital would be the licence to the success of my expedition, I was prepared to go to any length to plead for a new test.

Without any great display of concern my examiner merely said: "Huh! You don't seem very much at home in it, but I suppose you'll do. Come into the office."

I paid him my ten shillings, and emerged with a driving licence. This seemed to me to be a very efficient bit of business.

Then the boy question cropped up again. This boy racket is one of the mysteries of Africa. One morning I found a queue of nondescript natives, wearing every possible kind of garment, assembled on the terrace outside the house. There were boys—tall boys, short boys, thin boys, fat boys, all grinning cheerfully. Someone had said that the

boss wanted a boy, so the cousins and uncles of the servants in the house had trooped up from the town to see if there was anything doing. I shall never cease to wonder at the adaptability of the African boy. For two pounds a month he is your devoted slave. He will fetch and carry for you, go through almost unendurable hardships, and usually he has a pleasant smile. The Capetown boy is an unfortunate product of the mixture of civilisation and the wild. He is a spoilt boy in his way, with his passion for wearing European clothes, and the dying embers of his primeval native character ever at war with his town habits.

My little regiment, assembled by the head boy, mostly wore khaki trousers, black coats, and large slouch hats. I had decided that I did not want a boy, so the native butler, Bobbet, dismissed all his relatives with much argument. Boss did not want a boy. The boys knew better. Boss was going to Durban. They would wait. Bobbet won in the end.

Bobbet was a remarkable fellow. One day I wanted a taxi to go into Capetown. After ten minutes of my own futile efforts to get the native garage to send a taxi, I was giving up in perspiration of despair, when I found the amiable Bobbet at my side. He took the receiver and spent a good ten minutes in voluble explanation. Putting down the receiver with an air of gratified triumph, he assured me that the taxi would come.

An hour later there was still no taxi. I began to get annoyed, because I was really in a hurry.

That is a sin in Africa. I harangued Bobbet unmercifully, and he went to the telephone again with an air of cheerful resignation. I had to listen to him patiently for another ten minutes. Then I went out into the garden. A few minutes later

he actually did me the honour of hurrying himself for my special benefit. He arrived, saying breathlessly: "Boss, taxi, he come like blazes."

Sure enough, after another hour two taxis arrived. I took one. Bobbet dealt with the other.

If you can imagine being driven by a Paris taximan over very rough roads with a lot of right-angled corners that are negotiated at full speed, you can have some idea of how the native taxi boy takes life—and that of his passenger. This particular fellow had only two speeds: all out or stop dead. He changed from one to the other with such bewildering suddenness that my nose was more or less always in danger of pushing out the front glass of his cab, had it been there. Somebody else had forestalled me in that doubtful pleasure.

I got to Capetown without any broken bones, and went on with my purchasing. The problem of finding the way for my expedition really seemed unsurmountable. In the first place, no one believed I was really trying to go to Cairo, and nobody was really interested. I did not expect them to be, but I was surprised that the beyond meant so little to the town dwellers. It is the same throughout Africa. Every town is a parish. I learned as time went on that distance has Africa in its immeasurable grip, although aeroplanes are rapidly coming into use.

How I was going to get away from Capetown became a real and seemingly insoluble problem. The first ray of hope came when I alighted on the offices of that excellent organisation, the R.A.C., where I was received by a bright faced young woman, who instantly produced me a route to Nairobi. It gave me distances, hotel information—

and where I could obtain petrol—an important essential to my venture.

I set out on Empire Day. Driving through the suburbs of Capetown on the first stage of my great adventure, I found it difficult to imagine that I was not leaving the suburbs of a prosperous seaside resort at home. From no aspect could I obtain even a suggestion of the hazardous undertaking I knew lay before me.

A few hours brought a change—the bottom of the Sir Lowry Pass that corkscrews up a sheer hillside. At first it seemed menacing and formidable, but it yielded readily to the sturdy Ford. The summit gained without a suggestion of steam from the radiator, I stopped and looked round. Capetown appeared like a fairy town across the shimmering expanse of False Bay. The African atmosphere is amazingly clear. The hills stand out against the sky as clearly as if you were looking at them through field glasses. In the distance they take on a sheen of light blue.

Time was passing, so I cast a last almost regretful peep at this wonderfully beautiful mountain friezed panorama, and drove on.

The view in front was vastly different. A tract of wide, undulating country, brown in tint, almost foreboding in its desolation, rolled away to the inevitable distant mountain range.

Contrary to my expectation the road was metalled and comparatively good. It changed, however, without warning, to a murren track. These roads were originally made by native labour. The process is extraordinarily simple. The top of the veldt is scraped off to an agreed width, and traffic automatically follows the scraping. The work is sometimes aided by the use of a grader, an appliance not unlike the old-fashioned sweeper

used in many English boroughs, except that it has a knife instead of a broom. Drawn by oxen, it is pulled backwards and forwards over certain sections of the road, and for a time leaves it without any ruts.

Those ponderous ox waggons of the Cape farmer constituted the only traffic problem. The road was innocent of hedges, so I had no difficulty in passing these vehicles, some of them drawn by as many as eighteen spans of oxen. They joggle along at about one and a half miles an hour and cover incredible distances. A Kaffir boy with a large whip persuades the languid oxen to move faster, and the Boer farmer squats on the front board. It is a rare thing to see one of these farm carts without its attendant dog, which barks aggressively at the approach of a car.

The native cattle are humped and seem to be admirably suited for the purpose of haulage. A native boy slithering at the head of the team literally draws the leading pair of oxen by means of two pieces of rope that he never allows to go slack. The team would stop if he did and the whip wielder, who can flick the rump of a bullock several spans ahead of him, would labour in vain.

Each ox waggon provided me with a stimulating thrill; each new vista of the sweeping, untamed space beckoning ahead freshened my desire to get on and see Africa.

I was making good speed in spite of the corrugations which had begun to run at right angles across the road. Signs of civilisation soon became rarer.

A hundred and fifty miles going on the first day brought me to Swellendam. This countryside, flanked by sweeping hills, was a disappointment to my preconceived ideas. I had expected green to be the predominant note of what I had been

told was a most fruitful stretch of arable land. Instead, it was brown, and dried up. It looked so dry that it would hardly feed a rat. Here for the first time I was to learn that Africa was a country of contradictions. Occasionally the basin in front of me was lined with watercourses that stood out like green veins. The dust was appallingly depressing, and the beauty of the road was not enhanced by the towering masses of dust-laden prickly pear and cactus, which, however, added a note of colour with their red flamed spiky flowers.

The prickly pear is the Jonah of many parts of African cultivation. It grows everywhere, is of little use as food for animals and refuses to be extinguished. My first impression of this persistent fungus was not a happy one. Later, when I came to stretches of country where its fleshy, useless bulk overran the landscape, I came to dislike it intensely.

Striking a stretch of well irrigated arable land, I slowed up on observing a covey of partridges. They differ from our own by being greyer in colour and having longer legs. The presence of the birds stirred memories of many happy autumn days' shooting in Hampshire.

I saw an astounding number of hawks and carrion crows. I imagine their presence accounted for the scarcity of the smaller variety of birds. There seemed to be a hawk sitting on every telegraph pole, and another hovering in the air searching for its next meal.

I was soon to learn that Africa does not bury its dead. The carrion-feeding birds and animals are too eager and too numerous to render that rite possible. A horse may die, an animal fall sick, and the winged or stealthy-footed scavengers are on the spot as readily as the undertakers.

Save for a few doves, plovers and glossy coloured starlings, and an occasional stone-chat, the crows and the ever circling hawks were the only signs of life I saw on this shadeless sun-browned landscape.

The day was comparatively warm and I was driving in a flannel suit, with the usual collar and tie.

I got to the Commercial Hotel at Swellendam shortly before six. By the time I had put away the car the day had disappeared, leaving in its wake a disconcerting gloom and chilliness. Almost shivering, I hurried into the bar. This was the first demonstration of how altitude affects temperature.

The landlord was a bronzed, hairy fellow with an open-necked shirt. He introduced himself by saying: "Hullo, you come in and have a drink."

There is nothing standoffish about Africa at the magic hour of sundown. Within a few minutes I knew everyone in the bar. The atmosphere was one of friendly unconvention. None of my new friends wore collars or ties. While waiting for dinner—many drinks later from my arrival—a girl came in. She was wearing a man's shirt, shorts which concealed very little of a pair of shapely limbs, and short socks. The whole effect of the costume was pleasing and businesslike. One of her companions wore flannel bags and a college blazer, the other an open shirt and twill trousers. She told me that she had just come back from a shooting expedition. When she changed into more orthodox feminine costume later in the evening, I found myself almost regretting the alteration.

From the conversation I was beginning to realise my projected adventure was to be no easy undertaking. I resisted the temptation to linger

among these friendly, helpful folks, and filled up my tanks and pushed on next morning.

I would dearly have loved to accept one of the many invitations to a duck shoot, but Africa was calling me—and I was impatient to be off. The route ahead was across veldt bush country, to which my eyes were now becoming accustomed. Passing from settlement to settlement of ugly tin-roofed dwellings, built doubtless on the scores of quickness, cheapness and convenience, I felt myself yearning for a vista unspoiled by these ugly blotches of civilisation. My wish was granted with that amazing suddenness typical of Africa. But surprises were ahead.

I had reached a spot called George, two thousand feet above sea level, when it came on to rain. Within ten minutes the road disappeared. What had been a conveniently dusty track was now a sea of mud. I set about the task of fixing on four chains in a thorough downpour, and fervently thanked the helpful young man at Capetown who had insisted on showing me how to fix them, and who had gone to the utmost pains in the shop to ensure that they fitted exactly—car chains can be hellishly obstinate. The job took me a good three-quarters of an hour. At the end of it, very damp, a little more mud-bedraggled than may have been absolutely necessary, I set off East again.

I was heading towards the Wilderness, that famous African beauty spot, which nestled under the mountains two thousand feet below me. The deeply-rutted track was heavily wooded on each side, and twisted and twirled in the most unexpected directions. My first experience of driving a skidding car down a mountain side was little short of terrifying; and the strain was not alleviated by the rain, and the rapidly approaching

darkness. I went down hazardously, slipping, sliding, clutching at the wheel, and peering vainly into the gathering shadows ahead.

After a gruelling quarter of an hour of this kind of thing, the road broke into a clearing quite unexpectedly, and a river appeared below me on the right. A couple more bends brought me on the track, flush with the river, which was in full spate. Swollen by the rain it was roaring along, its brownish surface flecked with frothing agitation.

The struggle with the car had made me pretty tired, but I felt I had got over the worst of the hectic slide, so I persuaded the car to stop and sat back to regain my breath and to take in the sheer beauty of the scene.

The river was making so much noise that it would have been difficult to hear one's self speak. I was bending over it, to see if there were any fish in the boiling surface when I heard a bewildering rushing noise coming from down stream, where the turbulent waterflow disappeared round a corner. The noise rapidly became louder, as if it was sweeping towards me; and suddenly from round the wooded bank there appeared a wall of water at least a couple of feet in height. I stepped back apprehensively as it spread out its crested head right across the river and came shrieking towards me. In an incredibly short time it had swept wrathfully past the spot where I stood, and vanished out of sight, leaving behind only a peculiar roaring noise, which sufficed to convince me I was not dreaming.

It took me a few minutes to realise that for the first and perhaps the only time in my life, I had seen a bore in full action. This one was caused by the river in full stream meeting the incoming tide in the bottle-necked, steeply-banked estuary.

I pushed on half a mile, and came across a wild, green sea, breaking on a very steep sandy beach. The waves, twenty feet or more in height, came in at a bewildering speed, to smash their mighty heads on the steep beach so rapidly that there was no time for the crests to spread. The effect of this is that the water is forced down underneath the trough of the succeeding breaker. The incoming tide follows closely on the top of the back-wash and produces a vertical whirlpool. The resulting spume rises like a cloud to at least fifty feet in height, and higher where the coast is rocky. It is absolutely suicidal to bathe more than knee-deep—if possible to go in the water at all. There would not be the slightest chance of surviving if you fell over and once got beneath the waves. People do bathe near the Wilderness in carefully selected and protected spots. During the night I listened to the roar of the waves, with the vivid remembrance of an artillery barrage during the War.

Next morning it began to rain again. I was glad I had not taken off the chains. The climb up the narrow road, twisting its way round a thickly wooded mountain slope, with a sheer drop of a hundred feet or more on one side, was every inch an adventure. The wheels began to spin, and soon control became almost out of the question. I merely kept my foot down and tried to anticipate the movement of the rear of the car. I hoped almost desperately that I would not meet a bullock waggon on the downward journey. There is no scope for the nicety of driving when you are persuading a heavily loaded one tonner up a gradient of one in four on a surface that scarcely exists.

My luck was definitely out—I ran head on to a

bullock team in the first mile. Its leader boy was shuffling aimlessly along, well in the centre rut of the track. To stop was out of the question, so I swung my wheel over with the trepidity of a tripper on the "Dodgem" cars at Blackpool, and held my breath for an awful moment. The back of the car swung steadily inwards, and then came back like the pendulum of a clock. I felt the wheels grip suddenly, and my forward and upward speed increased. As I passed him the boy yelled and yanked his first pair of bullocks to the side, my front offside wheel slipped off the edge of the track, and the steering wheel translated the sudden lack of surface underneath the tyre by giving an ominous, shivering twist. I turned it inwards almost desperately, and for anxiety packed moments seemed to be hanging on the sticky surface of a slope that slid away beneath me to a sheer drop of two hundred feet. I can only liken my predicament to that of a satiated wasp slithering round the top of a jam jar.

The odds that I should slip down to disaster seemed to be heavily weighted against me, but the car hung on gamely, and was showing signs of being under control by the time I had got to the waggon, with its phlegmatic owner riding on the top of its load. I could not help wondering whether either he or the kaffirs would bother to disturb themselves if I had dropped over the edge.

A few bends further up I struck twenty-two yards of donkey team straggling its way down, spread across the track like a casually dropped chain. Donkeys are lighter and more nimble than oxen—I could charge them safely anyhow. I stuck to my edge of the track and put my foot down. The donkeys shied up the precipitous bank. I hope they understood Kaffir curses. I managed

to miss the ramshackle, squeaking cart at the end of the team and attained the last stretch of the hill, where the track went up almost vertically as if attracted by the gleam of daylight beyond. My back wheels began to spin in the mud so swiftly that they must have given me a gear ratio ten times lower than that intended by the makers of the car.

The summit was another thickly wooded plateau, with a road even more slippery. The sensation was a varied one, however, this time. The car began to slither forwards. One hair-pin bend that presented itself with all the unexpectedness of an unwelcome guest nearly landed me over a sinister-looking precipice dropping hundreds of feet to the tops of a cluster of blue gum trees.

I think the track, with its cavernous ruts, must have had a subtle attraction for the wheels of my car. They certainly stuck to it like steel filings to a magnet. More by luck than judgment—and with a bad attack of “nerves”—I reached Knysna.

CHAPTER II

Cape Province

MY inside as well as my watch told me it was past lunch time as my tired and dishevelled self drew up outside the local inn at Knysna.

I was soon interviewing the barman, a cheery Welshman. He seemed hugely amused when I told him I was going to Cairo.

"Ha-ha! you've got a neck," he said, with good-natured accusation, "coming out here when this country's on the gold standard. Still, let 'em all come. We've had Bernard Shaw through the other week."

I can only surmise that G.B.S. called in the bar to ask the way. I had other interests.

Everyone crowded round to join in his laughter and the conversation. Soon I noticed the company was keenly interested in a game which the barman was intermittently playing with one of his customers. I inquired what it was. My new friend was delighted.

"Come along—we'll teach you," he laughed. I learnt to my cost, but had some good fun. The game is known locally as honeymoon bridge—so named because two people play against each other for drinks.

After we had swopped drinks all round, this amazing barman leant across to me with a knowing twinkle in his eye, and thumped the bar as if something had suddenly dawned on him.

"By Jove! I've got it," he exclaimed. "I thought Bernard Shaw would bring us some luck. Bless my soul if he hasn't—seeing that we've got Tom Walls with us now."

I looked at him blankly. His meaning hadn't dawned on me. The bar folk came crowding in closer.

"Tom Walls himself," he accused me, with jovial emphasis. "You're a cool one, coming out here now. I suppose you're trying to get some more money on that nag of yours." My protests were drowned in roars of laughter.

"But I'm not Tom Walls!" I pleaded as convincingly as I could. That brought another concerted laugh from the crowd. They "knew" I was Tom Walls.

Now I had seen Orwell's sensational win in the Two Thousand, and in common with about a million other optimists had backed him, feeling sure he would win. It was no use telling these chaps that. They wanted my tip, and were certain that "April V"—"my" horse, was going to win.

They just would not believe I was not the actor, although I had never been mistaken for Tom Walls before in my forty-odd years. After my "discovery" the hospitality became exceedingly lavish. Maybe I owe Tom Walls a few drinks taken on his behalf by proxy.

After lunch, the whole of the jovial bar party turned out to bid "April V's" owner farewell. I suspect a lot of extra money went on that fortunate horse. I admit that I drove off into the wild with my faith in Orwell a little shattered.

Leaving Knysna, I tackled the Prince Alfred Pass, a four thousand foot climb up eight miles of road, running between precipitous mountains. The top of this Pass gave me my first glimpse of the

real veldt country. As far as the eye could see were great rolling plains sweeping away to the inevitable blue mountain range crouching across the distant horizon like some massive beast at rest. The monotony of the plain was only broken here and there by an ugly tin-roofed townling, a few houses snuggled together as if taking shelter from the bleakness of the face of the dreary veldt.

I went on. It was exciting even to contemplate that immense distance ahead, and intensely thrilling to imagine for one moment the mysteries it might have in store.

By the time I had got to Avontour—an exceedingly bleak-looking town—I seemed to have walked as far as I had ridden. Many of the farms extend across the roads, and in order to keep the cattle from straying, the farmers have put gates across their property at regular intervals. In order to pass, each of the wretched gates has to be opened; and closed, for decency's sake. It is quite an easy matter to drive a car through a gate held open for you, but when you have to get out, open it, tie it back, drive your car through, untie it, and drive on to the next annoyance—perhaps half a mile away, you can imagine the labour involved. Thoughts on opening gate number 100: "Why had I not brought a boy with me?" Answer: "Hanged if I know." Sometimes I was in luck, and found a curly-haired, fat-tummied piccanin, who opened the gates for the reward of a few sweets or a penny. I stopped at a store and bought a supply of sweets for the purpose.

Avontour looked so unattractive that my dislike lured me into doing a very foolish thing—in spite of the gates. I drove on into the darkness.

I hardly realised the penalty of my foolhardiness when the dusk fell as suddenly as a

curtain at the theatre. Driving at night in England, where your lights are reflected back by the hedges and trees, is child's play compared with persuading a car along a slippery, wandering track with no visible edges.

Rain was falling steadily. The air had suddenly become chilly, and these infernal gates had to be negotiated at all too regular intervals. Every time I got out I was nervously conscious of the awful foreboding darkness. Sometimes I listened, but I could hear no sound that one could associate with man or beast.

The perpetual bumpiness of the road, the cold, the strain of hanging on to the wheel, had reduced me to an unbelievable state of miserable discomfort. I had left a good forty miles of that intolerable blackness behind me when I came upon a most welcome sight. A lighted window! I had reached Assegai Bosch. True, it was only two or three small houses and a store, but at that moment it was the most desirable spot in the whole of Africa.

An Irish landlord this time. One glance was enough for him to sum up my miseries. He stemmed my bitter, truly British tirade about the alleged road, by grabbing me forcibly by the arm, and pushing me into a snug parlour glowing with inviting warmth.

"Come right in here," he ordered. "All you want is a good meal and a drink. You'll soon be all right then."

He was right. A meal, a smoke and drink can banish the most abject misery of the weary traveller. Within a few minutes I was a new man, with all discomfort forgotten. Warmed inside and out, I relaxed in the friendly atmosphere of the bar parlour, and planned my next day's journey.

In my pocket was a letter of introduction from a man in England to the bearer of a very famous name, who I knew lived in this area. I showed it to a local farmer and asked him how to get there.

"Oh, it's just round the corner," he said casually. "It won't take you long."

Round the corner may mean anything in Africa. In this case it meant a distance of a hundred and twenty miles over the most incredible road. First there were miles and miles of my particular aversion, the prickly pear. The wheel tracks I was following had been worn deep by a succession of heavy ox waggons, and the centre of the track was so high that the back axle began to act as a plough. This did not make steering easy. However, after having come through the night before I felt I could tackle anything.

For five hours I headed for "round the corner." Then I stopped to ask a Dutch woman the way to the farm I wanted. She thought for a minute, and then pointing to a goat track flanked by a large boulder, said: "It's up there—just round the corner." In my innocence I really believed it.

I took to the track, and bumped along for another fifteen miles. Occasionally the car leapt forward like a demented animal and bounced across a fiendish gap in the path. I spent most of my time standing on the brake, or alternately jamming my foot on the accelerator. Every bump must be the last, I thought. I could not conceive of anything less than a tank having the guts to move forward on that track. One unexpected crevice dropped me a sheer six feet on to a boulder. This must be the end, I thought. But the front wheels bounced upwards off the stone, and in the next few seconds we had leapt on the

firmer ground and went careering doggedly upwards.

I was feeling sore and bone weary as the path shot out of a clearing in the eternal prickly pear. In front was a tin-roofed, white-fronted, low built farm house, with adjacent buildings straggling across a yard sheltered by a half dozen or more of the inevitable blue gum trees.

My first impression of the place was that of coming into a disused dump or breaking-up yard for ancient motor cars. Inside the railings I spied a jumbled collection of debris—decrepit motor cars, ox waggons minus wheels, cycles, wire, oil drums and rubble. Seeing no sign of life, I felt I had made a mistake. My heart sank at the thought of having to go back down that infernal track.

Then I saw. A sparse little old man in a tweed suit with an open shirt was pacing swiftly up and down the length of a low grey stone wall that ran along one side of the farmstead. He walked with hands behind his back and head bent down, in that state of agitation one associates with an anxious sea-captain striding his bridge in a moment of stress.

As I walked over, he stopped suddenly.

“So you’ve arrived, you young devil!”

“Of course,” I said, as we shook hands. “Didn’t you get my telegram?”

“Telegram! How the hell d’you think telegrams arrive here?”

I had wired three days before. The message was doubtless waiting for him at the nearest postal collection box forty miles away—at the other end of that awful track, which I learnt afterwards was only used by his native boys to collect mail and stores.

I stayed at the farmstead for three or four days. Fifty years of the veldt had not dimmed the pioneering spirit in my virile host. He still lived in a state of utter simplicity; far from what I had expected, bearing in mind the almost glamorous fame associated with his name. He had actually chosen the farm for its proximity to the huge, ugly-looking mountain, the base of which was said to be rich with iron ore.

I felt myself a complete pioneer feeding off billtong, which is sundried meat. It might have been zebra, buck or beef. Home-made bread, a very tasty stock-pot soup, and ample quantities of an excellent cheese. The old gentleman was inordinately proud of his possessions, which seemed to be collections of junk. He had about two thousand sheep grazing, a herd of Afrikaner (hump-backed) cattle, and five or six hundred goats, which have considerable value with the natives.

I should have thought that after fifty years of life, having been in every rush for wealth in gold and metals from the Cape to Zambesi, my friend would have settled down to a peaceful life, but no—he was still anxious to wrest a fortune from the earth. One morning he said to me:

“Come up and look at my iron mine.”

We set off together, accompanied by a couple of boys. As we got nearer the mountain, my host became wildly enthusiastic. Occasionally he stopped to pick up large lumps of ore and handed them to me for examination, saying:

“One day there’s a fortune in this mountain. Look at this—the richest ore in the country.”

I know nothing about metals, but I had no doubt there was iron in this ore, because I could actually see the metal. The further we went, the

more he talked about his prospects of fortune, until I actually began to get iron fever. Hundreds of people in Africa suffer from gold fever in a similar way. The merest hint of the discovery of a gold seam sends thousands of enthusiasts off to work on any indicated spot.

We were heading up the side of the bleak shale covered hill pimpled with the inevitable ant heaps, and I was beginning to wonder where was the exact location of my friend's iron mine. Soon we almost had to crawl up the hillside. The exertion of the climb had rather curtailed his dilation on mining. Right ahead I noticed a heaped up crater, about the size of the usual hole made by a repair gang in the London streets.

As we got nearer to it, I heard a most extraordinary noise—even for Africa. It was a rhythmic grunt. As we approached it became louder. I immediately thought it was an animal in pain—one of the old man's sheep must have got in the hole and was dying. With the best possible intentions I hastened my scramble up the mountain side to put the poor thing out of its misery.

I gained the edge of the crater and looked over. In my haste I had disturbed some of the rubble, which began to cascade down the edge, not on to any unfortunate sheep, but on the head of a native boy wearing a red and white stockinette cap. I still have the memory of his pained expression decorated by a mouthful of magnificent teeth. He probably thought I was the wildest, strangest interloper he had ever seen. Only when he was convinced I was not wilfully throwing rubble down at him did he go on with his work of chiselling lumps of iron ore from the side of the hole, with the help of a massive hammer. As



Surf

Note terrific back-wash



*Lord and Lady Knollys and author
The Start from Cape Town*



Ostriches in Transkei



The simple home of a man whose name is glamorous in African history

he delivered each stroke, he grunted loudly. That was the noise I mistook for the dying sheep.

Whether it was relief at not finding the sheep, or the surprise at seeing this serious faced lone miner responsible for this prodigious noise, or the size of this "gigantic" mine, it is difficult to say, but I sat down on the hillside doubled up with laughter. Hearing me, the boy climbed his wooden ladder and stuck his solemn, curious face over the top, which made me laugh all the more.

Realising my host was looking at me with pained astonishment, I strove very hard to collect myself. I could sense his disappointment when he said abruptly :

"Well, let's go and look at the sheep."

Walking among these animals, which were of the Persian breed, I explained that I had been laughing at the noise that had come out of the "mine." I dared not explain that I had expected to see a real mine, with machinery, shafts, and smelting apparatus.

CHAPTER III

The Transkei

YARNING with a member of the South African Parliament, and a famous rugger international, in the bar at a club in Port Elizabeth, I mentioned that I was hurrying North to do some hunting.

"Hurrying!" he echoed. "Why, you've been here a week. When you get to Durban, you'll stay a month at least."

I felt it was high time I left this hospitality and pushed on with my real work, but just to see that I did not get away from Durban too soon, my friend insisted on my taking a batch of letters of introduction, telling me I should arrive at Durban during the season.

The hospitality of Port Elizabeth completely overwhelmed me. I came into the pleasant little seaside town intending to stay a day, and was immediately swallowed up in a wave of hospitality. Party followed party. The day had no set hours. People came and grasped me by the hand, we swopped drinks and experiences, and soon it would be too late to start that day. The next day I would find I had promised to go out to dinner, so the start had to be delayed again.

I went to the races, I dined and danced, and had a thoroughly good time. Wally Wilson, a member of the Chevrolet expedition, which managed to get two cars from Capetown to Stockholm via Cairo, was hugely tickled when I told him my intentions.

"Man, man!" he said cheerfully, "you're going to have a hell of a time. But I wish I was coming with you."

I am sure he did not really mean that, because he thought my scheme was completely hair-brained. He very helpfully came and looked over my equipment, to see if he could suggest anything additional to the tackle I was already carrying.

As a parting gift he presented me with a copy of the book dealing with his expedition. On the fly leaf he had inscribed: "With my deepest sympathy."

I found time to visit a snake Zoo owned by an Englishman called Fitz-Simmonds, the well-known authority on African reptiles. His pit contains every conceivable type of snake—cobras, puff-adders, and the deadly black mamba. Fitz-Simmonds has been adding specimens to his collection for years. He took me round his snake-park, pointing out the various specimens with the gusto of a real enthusiast. I experienced a strange feeling of loathing for the horrid reptiles.

Apparently snake-collecting has its complications. The natives know that Fitz-Simmonds is a buyer of reptiles, and are always bringing him specimens. There is a story told of how one native presented himself almost every morning with a fine specimen of a particularly poisonous and exceptionally rare reptile. Of course it was readily purchased. The man's visits became so regular that the snake's rarity decreased accordingly. The puzzled collector questioned the native snake-hunter as to where he was finding his specimens. The man's explanation was the usual native nod of the head to indicate the bush country. For several mornings he went on producing the snake.

One evening the snake-farmer found an exceptionally large specimen in the deep, smooth-sided pit allocated to the particular type of poisonous reptile in which the dusky snake-seller specialised. It was the native himself. He had climbed the high wall surrounding the snake-park, and had calmly slid into the pit crowded with the venomous reptiles, to pop a fine specimen into his bag to take to the "boss" next morning and exchange for good money. He ran an enormous risk of being bitten and dying a horrible death, but evidently he thought the proceeds merited that.

The Orange Colony at Sunday River Settlement is composed to a very large degree of retired officers struggling with great fortitude to make a living under most difficult circumstances.

Lack of water is their tragedy. The Sunday River is brackish, except when in spate, and quite useless for irrigation. The orange crop is in constant danger of being ravaged by the mealie bug. To overcome these pests the settlers breed ladybirds, which wage effective war on the bugs.

My route to Durban, some six hundred miles ahead—six hundred miles in Africa can be compared with a thousand anywhere else—lay through the great Transkei native reserve.

This proved to be a vast, rolling, open veldt country, varying between three thousand and six thousand feet above sea level, with no definite road through it.

I picked up a series of wheel tracks heading into the beyond and soon found myself bumping up the side of a surprisingly steep mountain. A fair description of the Transkei country would be a broad sheet of corrugated iron enlarged to an extent when the corrugations are anything from one thousand to three thousand feet in height. Add

to this a surface worse than Salisbury Plain could ever hope to produce in the middle of the worst English winter, and you have some idea of the country which I set out to conquer.

It came on to rain. I cursed heartily, and put on the chains. The road was nothing more than a track full of holes and mud-filled ruts. I went on in first gear, riding the car almost like a bucking broncho.

The only sign of life I saw was a bunch of ostriches. They ran across my bows with a long, swinging stride, looking for all the world like trotting horses in a show ring.

Transkei is entirely a native reserve. They have their own rulers, their own laws, and are merely subject to white rule. The area is approximately the area of England and Scotland, but it is none too large for the ever increasing population.

The natives live in rondavels. From the distance these queer, dome-shaped dwellings look like round haystacks; usually they are grouped together like so many ricks in a Scottish farmer's straw yard. The huts have no windows and no ventilation. When their occupants came out to watch me go by, I noticed their apparel consisted mainly of brightly-hued blankets that added a pleasing touch of colour to the monotonous brown of the veldt country.

I did not relish being caught by the darkness in this wild country, so I put on all possible speed and by dusk was lucky enough to arrive at Umtata, the white capital of the country. My rough passage had shaken me into a state of nerviness which took some throwing off.

Over drinks at the bar I learnt a lot about the million odd natives who inhabit the settlement. The head of the police, who had lived in the country

for many years, had a satisfying answer to every question.

Passing through the various settlements I had noticed that occasional rondavels had white lintels running round their doorways. He told me these denoted that the homestead was a Christian one. A number of these houses together must not be taken as the outward and visible sign of piety. When a boy in this part of the country commits a punishable offence, or rather when he thinks he may be discovered, the first thing he does is to become a Christian. He has been told that the Christian fold is for sinners, so it is a natural thing for him to join with other malefactors in the hope of avoiding punishment. He soon finds, however, that his new faith is not accepted as a plea in a court of law, but it does enable him to live in a house with a white lintel.

Cattle stray everywhere in the Transkei. I asked how the natives knew their own. My friend assured me that by the exercise of some uncanny power each owner could pick out his own beasts from the middle of a vast herd. Contrary to expectations, cattle stealing is rare. The native law in this respect is admirably suited to the case. In a dispute brought before the native chief, the man accused of wrongful possession must first prove how he came by his cattle. If he fails, he loses his case. The procedure is simple and effective.

I asked how a handful of whites could live in perfect safety among the millions of natives.

"Isn't there any unrest among the natives?" I inquired.

My companion shook his head: "No—only the Wellington movement. Have you heard about that?"

He proceeded to tell me an amazing story. One sad day in the reserve there arrived from America a bombastic darkie with a mind poisoned by the worst that Harlem can teach a native. The name he had chosen for himself was "Wellington." It did not take him long to find that he had fertile soil for his utterances in the simple minds of his brethren who had never seen the big city.

His fantastic story was eagerly swallowed by the natives. He told them he had come from a country entirely populated by blacks, ruled over by a great black king. There had been a war. The natives had heard that, but Wellington had the real story of that war for their ears. When times had been very bad for the white King of England, he had travelled across the seas to see the black king of America, and had begged for the services of a million gallant black warriors to beat back the Germans.

The black king made his conditions, which were expounded by Wellington with great pantomime. If the black warriors beat back the Germans, the white English were to hand back Africa to the blacks!

But what happened according to Wellington? Why, the blacks won the war for England, but the English refused to leave Africa.

Wellington's story spread like mustard seed. He assembled the people and told them that behind the great mountain ranges intersecting the Transkei were hundreds and hundreds of aeroplanes and guns sent over by the black king of America to fight the perfidious whites. They were merely awaiting his signal to attack, and drive the enemy into the sea.

His story had already gained some thirty thousand adherents. I learnt that they had carried

their belief so far as to keep no white animals, or use no European material of any kind. The simple people are still waiting for the aeroplanes and black armies to bring them salvation from over the hills. The gallant "Wellington" has escaped over the border, from where he still carries on his propaganda mostly by word of mouth. The natives still talk of his romantic exploits, passing on the fantastic stories which are brought into the reservation by comrades from the outside. Whenever a family adopts "Wellington" as its romantic hero, it immediately slaughters all its white chickens and pigs.

I listened to my friend's story with a growing sense of inward agitation.

"What are you going to do about it?" I asked.

He shrugged his shoulders. The gesture was one of confidence rather than resignation.

"Buy you another drink," he replied. "And then I'm going to bed."

I lay awake a long time that night listening to the rain, and combing over my impressions of the last few weeks. I had already seen much. The country had got me. I was a very minute particle of this vast land. I was craving to learn everything I could, but I had already learned so much that my brain seemed in a whirl. I liked the friendly directness of the folk I had met, but I could never be anything but overawed by the wandering immensity of the country. At each stop I struck something new. My mind went wandering ahead to the problem of the white race versus the black. Would the doctrine of Wellington spread? If it did, how could it be stemmed?

Then, feeling more practical, I switched my errant thoughts back to the problem of to-morrow's journey—and promptly went to sleep.

The rain had stopped by next morning, leaving behind a biting cold wind. When the wheel tracks which I began to follow had lost themselves in a thick, viscous mud one mile out of Umtata, I felt very much as if I was driving across a never ending ploughed field a few hours after it had been flooded by a river overflowing its banks. When I did succeed in picking up the wheel track, the ruts in it were often so deep that the car was in danger of turning over. If I managed to gain the crest of a ridge between the tracks, I flopped with a bump down into another deep rut on the other side.

Sometimes, sliding down a slope with the car in complete control of itself, I had the pleasing sense of making progress, but the hill that had to be encountered on the other side immediately spoilt everything. The car would merely stop, with the wheels spinning like fury. The first time this occurred, I sat waiting for something to happen. Nothing did, so inspired by a sudden panic that here might be the end of my motoring, I leapt out into the mud, and using a board as a base for the jack, levered the car up as high as I could. To give the wheel a chance of gripping I laid a sack on the surface of the mud, let down the jack, gathered up the board, and leapt into the car seat like a hare. Heavenly feeling! The wheel bit and we were off again, for quite twenty-five yards until I came to another mud-hole. I repeated the process more feverishly than before, driving off and snaking like fury across the mud. It was a minor tragedy having to leave my precious sacks behind each time.

This drive was one of the worst I ever had. I struck every possible kind of driving condition; tracks running round steep escarpments, and sloping

devilishly outwards, huge holes filled with mud, and a surface that was incredibly tricky. Fifteen stops meant fifteen sacks. I reflect now that I might have tied a sack to the back of the car by a length of rope and retrieved it at each stop. Experience is costly.

At the end of the day I was beggared according to my own "sack standard."

During this dreadful day I noticed three kinds of mud—red, white and black. The red is clay, sticky and binding. The white, created from erosions of the rock, is like coarse, damp sand. The black resembles the surface at the bottom of an English roadside pond. One's wheels sink into its treacherous depth with devastating suddenness.

Progress, mostly in first gear, was slow. Snow and sleet were falling pitilessly when I found myself benighted at a tiny ramshackle native store called Rode. I went in and asked for a bed.

By this time my vision of sunny Africa had been completely shattered. The day had been a cold, tough hell, so much so that I was nearly all in, mentally and physically. The proprietor of the store greeted me in his own version of the English language from the other side of a counter packed with tinned foods, kettles, saucepans, spades, groceries, brightly coloured blankets, handkerchiefs, hats and patent medicines. Strings of bright scarlet and yellow beads hung from the low ceiling, side by side with ropes, strings of onions, hams, and cards advertising quack concoctions. I had to push my way up to the counter through a crowd of native women, many of whom had their babies wrapped in a blanket on their backs.

The place had the familiar smell of a grocer's shop at home—tallow, hams, oils—the whole well flavoured with the odour of the native customers



*Road in mountains, Transkei, after rain
A drop of 1,500 feet on the left. Note the mud*



*Road ruts and mud 1 foot deep
Main road through Transkei*



*Heights above Great Kei River
The River is on the left and the Valley is 2,000 feet deep*

who shuffled silently around, but with all the enthusiasm of suburban women at a bargain sale.

The proprietor offered to put me up in his hutment, which consisted of two bedrooms and a living room. The accommodation was primitive, but anything in the way of shelter seemed like a palace to me that night.

I spent the evening sitting on the bare floor playing Fox and Geese with a half-Dutch child aged five. We also had a game of marbles, at which I lost consistently. I seemed to be doing an infernal lot of running about on the dusty floor, encouraged by the gurgles of the happy youngster, who insisted in tugging at my ear whenever I came within suitable range. The evening was certainly diverting, very different, I reflected, from the many I had spent in White's.

I awoke next morning to find that Africa had still something to show me. Snow this time. As far as the eye could see, the countryside was white. The enormous mountain range on the skyline was obviously thick with snow. My hat! I thought, this is Africa with a vengeance!

While I was trying to find courage to set off again, my host invited me to look over his garden. I was surprised to see oranges, plums and peaches growing on the trees, but covered in snow.

He went on in his pidgin English to eulogize the richness of the soil and the wonderful fruit-bearing propensities of the trees. Then he took me into his smelly little store already crowded with native buyers, and told me in a very friendly way that he was making a lot of money. Trade was good, had never been better, and would improve.

Did I like Africa? Good, well, this sure was the place. One could grow oranges—just think of that—and the price of cattle was high. He was still

talking of the virtues of his place when I went out to start up the car. I was feeling glum and very disinclined to set off again into the bleak, white wilderness, until he suddenly put his ugly mug inside the car and made it clear that he wanted to sell me his store.

From that moment I hurried. Not for all the gold in Africa would I have stayed in such a God-forsaken hole for one moment more than was absolutely necessary.

"Come in again and look the place over," he said, as I bade him good-bye.

The journey ahead was worse than anything I could possibly have anticipated. To-day I can't imagine how the car did it. I had to climb five thousand feet over Brook's Neck, on a track nothing more than a quagmire. The sump of the car was constantly bedded in the mud. Each bump added to my despair. Yesterday was repeating itself under the worst winter conditions. Although I had shut all the windows of the car, I was shivering with cold.

At Kokstad, a fair sized settlement six thousand feet above sea level, I felt I deserved a drink and pulled up beside another car outside a small inn. Inside I inquired my way to Harding. Someone in the noisy crowd yarning over drinks heard me and called out: "Oh, it's quite easy—you go by way of the Ingeli Pass." He took me to the door to show me a huge mountain dominating the landscape.

"But is it all right?" I asked, remembering my terrible experience on the last part of my journey. "Can I get through?"

"Get through!" he echoed my words. "Why, it's a picnic. I've just come that way myself. The road's a beauty for this part."

I was immensely relieved to learn that my troubles were nearly over, so, fortified by a few drinks and tremendously encouraged, I set off on what everyone assured me was just easy going. I was convinced, at any rate, that I could encounter nothing worse than that last climb of six thousand feet that had come as near breaking my heart as my back axle. Both had stood up to the strain incredibly well.

I won't dwell on that journey. It was every bit as bad as the previous one. As it got worse, my thoughts went back to my friend at Kokstad who had come down only that morning. This was probably just another example of time meaning nothing in Africa. He may have come down last summer, or three summers ago. Anyhow, thanks very much, old man, for giving me a little encouragement and some Dutch courage. You certainly helped me to tackle the pass with high hopes.

By the time I got to the top of the pass I was feeling damned angry with that glib young man, especially when a great wall of snow, which completely obliterated the road, reared up in front of me.

By this time I was in a dangerous mood. Such a little thing as a snowdrift did not mean very much to me. Quite recklessly I put my foot down hard and charged the car straight at it. I got at least four feet into the bulk of it with the snow churning up on each side of the bonnet like the bow wave of a ship. That charge was at least a thrill. It came as a break from the monotony of shaking and slithering up that terrible track to feel the bonnet bite deep into the yielding mass. But my triumph was short lived. The snow came up over the top, blotting out the windscreen. The Ford

suddenly striking a hard portion of the drift, threw up its nose, and hurtled out of the drift, to come to a stop with its sump firmly bedded on the top of a bank of tightly packed snow.

I sat and swore. Here was a pretty mess from which I would have to extricate myself. Luckily I had my entrenching tool with me—I had learned how to use it in the army—so, very damp and very truculent, I got out and went to work like a Chinese coolie on pay day. The idea of being benighted in this lonely spot made me frantic. Damn that fellow down there, with his easy advice.

The car was straddled across the hard part of the snow drift like a Grand National runner across the brush at Beecher's. I set to work with the entrenching tool, hacking the snow away from under the sump. It sank down at last, and I discovered to my great joy that the snow was freezing itself into a hard mass. Then I dug out two trenches, one for each wheel, to the end of the drift.

I was almost dead beat when I had finished, but I did not stop an instant, so anxious was I to see if the car would move. I pressed the starter and the miracle happened after a few anxious seconds of slither. It went forward with a jerk as the wheels bit suddenly, and in a few minutes I was joyfully slipping down the other side of the mountain towards Harding. I didn't care what happened now. I let the car go. One skid down a mountain was very much like another then.

I arrived at Harding, uncomfortably tired, aching all over, and still a little sore at my friend on the other side of the pass.

Durban is an immense contrast from that bleak snow covered mountain pass. It was as if I had

passed suddenly from the depth of winter into a miraculous summer. I found a pleasing town of sunshine, flowers, bright, clean streets and charming well-dressed people.

My friends at Port Elizabeth were correct in saying that I would linger at Durban—I did.

CHAPTER IV

Whaling

AMONG other industries, Durban possesses a whaling fleet. I had always wanted to take a trip in a whaler, not as a mere sight-seer, but as one of the crew. I was soon to learn that this was a very difficult object on which to set one's ambition. However, I was lucky enough to meet a man connected with the industry, who yielded to my entreaties and went so far as to say he would introduce me to the skipper of a whaler. At that he left it. In other words, if I could persuade the skipper to take me on as a hand I could go. If I failed, I stayed behind. It seemed quite a sporting proposition. Apart from the prospect of meeting adventure, I was keenly interested in this particular industry. Few people know of the existence of the Durban whaling fleet, which is actually one of the most important in the industry.

The beginning of my adventure was as bizarre a contrast with the warm, happy life of Durban as I could hope to achieve. After receiving final and still reluctant instructions from my friend, who probably expected to see me back again in the Club the next morning, I dressed myself as suitably as I could for what I had been warned was one of the dirtiest jobs in the world. Wearing a thick, woollen vest, a mechanic's garage suit, with an old mackintosh as protection against the wet, I reached the quay at midnight. The water of the

harbour was oily black, spangled here and there by the lights of the town. About the whole place was an atmosphere of eerie quiet. My only companions were a few natives and half-castes squatting about on the huge buttresses, or lining the steep steps leading into the water. They sat as motionless as statues, some of them half-naked. A closer inspection revealed that they were fishing. Otherwise there was no sign of life. Off shore lay various small craft with lights at their mast heads, rising and falling with the swell. Out to sea the intermittent flicker of a lighthouse with a revolving lamp provided the only disturbance of the scene.

It might have been just an ordinary harbour scene, except for one thing. I was breathing the most extraordinary smell in the world. The stench of a whaling station beggars description. It is unique, and can have no parallel. Already I seemed to be bathed in it, although I had as yet had no contact with any whales. Waiting, I could not help reflecting on the fortitude of those natives who had chosen this odoriferous spot for their fishing. The air was chilly as only an African night can be. I found myself shivering as I fingered my impromptu passports—two bottles of whiskey, which I had brought as a tangible means of introduction to the skipper. The temptation to open one was strong, but, I reflected, even good whiskey might become tainted with that incredible smell. So I waited with as much mental cheer as I could muster.

My friend had assured me that the whaler was due in about midnight. It would remain only long enough to fill up with fuel and stores, and set out again at three a.m. I found myself scanning the darkness with an eagerness that was almost

impatience, all the time wondering how much longer I could endure the stench of whale oil and blubber that permeated everything. The dust and grime of that quay blended with the smell of oil to provide a memorable odour. Outside the barrier I could see the ridge of the great Atlantic swell which tumbled its rollers incessantly towards the shore.

Of course I would be seasick this time ! I would cut a pretty figure, I thought, being ill on a whaler where the crew are *men* in every sense of the word, and tough ones at that. With growing trepidation, I reflected that by the time three a.m. arrived my vitality would be at its lowest ebb, and I should have swallowed just enough of the smell to upset my stomach. The tough whale men would look on me as an impossible greenhorn. For an hour and a half I paced this chilly quay with mixed feelings. At each step I seemed to become more densely soaked in whale-oil, and at each minute I felt a little more uncertain as to whether I really wanted to go out into those rollers on a whaler.

However, just as I was almost giving it up, a moving light appeared in the harbour mouth. The natives immediately sprang to life, and a few minutes later what seemed to me to be a very small ship arrived at the quay side. She was little larger than a big tug, and incredibly dirty. Apart from the few dusky hands on deck who leisurely tied her up, there was no sign of life on board.

I stepped on to the gangway and asked one of the lascars for the skipper. He told me the great man was asleep, but feeling that I had a right to wake him after my long vigil, I went to the cabin the sailor had indicated, and hammered on the door. I have since learned that in the strenuous

occupation of whale-hunting, the skipper of a whaler takes every opportunity to snatch an hour of sleep. When the hunt is on he can never leave his post.

In my ignorance—and once I had put my foot on board I had become amazingly and recklessly keen—I went on knocking. A noise that sounded like an animal being disturbed came from inside. I knocked again; quite a determined thump this time, and a moment later the door was opened by a little grey-haired man with a frown on his weather-stained face. He took my letter without a word, retreated inside the cabin to read it by the swinging lamp; then he returned to look at me with a somewhat pitying expression on his face.

I admit trying to look as tough as I could, probably without an atom of success. I don't know quite what I expected, but I admit I was staggered when he suddenly asked me, in perfect English, if I had any idea what I was letting myself in for. I remember him saying: "Do you think this is a joy-ride? If you do, let me tell you it's a big mistake."

I stammered that I would do any work he liked, as long as he would let me come. One look at this little skipper's face was evidence that on his ship at least he was the law, and accustomed to being obeyed. As I hurried on to assure him that I could turn my hand to anything, there came into my heart the awful fear—supposing I was seasick! The smell on board the boat was many times worse than that on the quay, and thicker, when it was confined between decks. Begging him to take me, I was terrified of making an idiot of myself in front of him and his crew.

It seemed to me minutes before he could make

up his mind. During his hesitation I pulled a bottle of whiskey out of my pocket, and asked him if he would like a drink. He immediately brought out two glasses from the cupboard, and we drank. As he put his empty glass down he suddenly said :

“ Well—you’re dressed alright for a start—now, mind you, I can’t tell you when you’ll get back, and you’ll find things a bit rough.”

I was thrilled. I seemed to be getting nearer. We had another drink, and he said :

“ This is business, you know, not pleasure ! We shan’t come back until we get a whale.”

This really looked as if I was going with him. I began to be happier and more sure of myself. We had another drink.

“ Good whiskey,” he remarked. “ Useful to keep the cold out. We shall be off in a couple of hours. Make yourself comfortable.”

I knew then that I was going ! As if by magic my inside settled itself, and I was happy again. The skipper was a Norwegian, as are nearly all whaling skippers. He introduced me to the only other whites aboard—the mate, a Finn, and the chief engineer, the inevitable Scot. The crew were all coloured. Heaven knows what nationality. From what I saw of them, neither they nor anyone else knew or cared. They were certainly the strangest assortment of natives it has ever been my lot to strike.

While we were getting further acquainted over the whiskey, the mate was supervising the loading of stores and fuel. I went up once to have a look, but decided that the smell of whale-oil down below in the warm, to which I seemed to have become acclimatised, was preferable to that above in the chilliness.

Then began my ordeal, which was surely one of

the stiffest struggles I have ever had to subdue a physical reaction. We seemed hardly to have left the harbour before we struck the rollers. The ship, having practically no keel, rode them like a cork, dipping and rolling in an alarming fashion.

The skipper told me that the reason for the absence of keel was to add to the ease of navigation. When on the track of a whale it is essential to have a boat which can twist and turn with ease.

It was still dark when we set off. I felt indescribably ill at the first roll, and was glad when the skipper suggested going below for a drink. I have never been seasick, but I felt that this was surely my Waterloo. Perhaps it was suppressed excitement, perhaps it was the smell, perhaps it really was the sea, but I began to experience a very nasty feeling in my tummy. Fortunately it passed away after one or two drinks.

The skipper and I soon became firm friends. He was an interesting little man and perfectly ready to give me all the information he could, once he saw that I had come on board as a worker, and not as an idle sightseer. For two hours he yarned to me about his work. He explained to me that whales were marine animals, and not fishes. In his opinion they are the largest survival of a very ancient form of life, and are closely related to the highest type of mammals. Contrary to general belief, they are warm blooded, mate as animals do, and the females suckle their young. A young whale at birth may be as much as twenty feet in length.

The whale is very keen of hearing, but rather deficient in sight. For this reason immediately the chase commences it is very important to keep absolutely silent. Once frightened, they will submerge and disappear. In any case they move

through the water at a speed which enables them to outpace the fastest whaler.

The skipper told me all this with the facility of a professor who knows his subject from A to Z, delivering his information in a quaint, impersonal fashion. He told me there were two kinds of whales—the Rorquals, *i.e.*, the Blue Whale and the Fin and the Humpback—and the Toothed Whales, of which the Sperm is a species. The Rorquals have tiny throats not more than six inches across. In front of the throat there is an enormous sieve of whalebone, through which the food is sifted before it can be taken into the great cavity of the mouth. These whales live almost entirely on small shrimps and other ocean food.

The Sperm Whale has teeth and a much bigger throat. He lives on giant cuttle fish. Some Sperm Whales contain ambergris, which is thought to be a diseased growth. It is highly valuable and is used in the manufacture of perfume. The biggest of them all is the Blue Whale. Specimens of this type sometimes measure one hundred feet in length, and weigh as much as two hundred tons.

Whales have to come up to the surface to breathe. As it comes to the surface, the animal drives out the foul air from its lungs with terrific force, and takes in fresh air. The blow hole is at the top of the head. As a certain amount of water is mixed with the breath, it becomes converted into spray. This spray contains a great deal of mucous, and smells horribly. The whale-hunter generally spots his quarry by the "blow."

Whales are hunted and shot with a harpoon gun. In most cases the skipper of the ship is the gunner as well, thus being the most important and most highly paid man in the industry.

The crew of the whaler depend largely on prize-

money, a percentage on each whale, so there is an element of monetary as well as physical adventure in the game, which is undoubtedly one of the most hazardous callings a man could choose.

But to return to my own particular hunt. Just as the first glimmer of dawn came creeping across the sea, the skipper, probably from a long habit, broke off his story, jumped up from his bunk, emptied his glass and ran on deck. I followed a little unsteadily.

The boat was rolling pretty considerably. Looking ahead, I noticed the harpoon gun in the bows. The skipper told me that it was already loaded. The harpoon was in position, and at the side of the apparatus the cable attached to the harpoon was coiled in such a way that it could play out without friction or other hindrance. While I was inspecting the gun, and experiencing an almost childlike desire to fire it, I heard a movement behind me seemingly from somewhere in the air. Looking up, I espied the lookout man taking his position in the crow's-nest on the mast.

Thus we stood, riding the rollers, all eyes, including my inexperienced ones, scanning the horizon in the greying light of the fast approaching dawn. Just as the atmosphere was becoming pale and clear enough for distinct visibility, I saw away in the distance what appeared to me to be a disappointingly small amount of spray hovering over a small, dark object that might have been a tiny raft, or even a floating cask. When I looked again it had disappeared. It appeared so small that I hardly believed it could be a whale, but it was. I could tell that by the tenseness that suddenly came over the skipper and his crew. The man up in the crow's-nest was leaning forward with glasses to his eyes, to try and discover what kind of whale

it was when it came up again. Each type of whale has to be hunted in a different way, if there is to be any hope of success.

For minutes we waited in complete silence, our course headed towards the last "blow." Then he came up again, giving out a gush of watery spray that seemed to be twice as large as the one before. It was a blue whale, the biggest and most valuable to the whale-hunter.

I could imagine the thrill of the game from a glance at the faces of my veteran companions. How much more I was thrilled myself, with the prospect of hunting the largest game of the sea! This was an entirely new form of hunting for me, but I appreciated that it demanded skill, patience and extreme endurance.

The skipper jumped to his gun, and everybody except myself did something. The ship went into action with the precision of a well-trained team of gunners. Not a word was spoken, other than a quietly whispered order to the engine-room to proceed at half speed. Gradually the ship turned, heading towards the monster. Every now and again another blow would be seen, and the lookout would extend his hand to give direction to the helmsman. Our course lay towards the broken patches of water made by the whale as he broke surface.

Nearer and nearer we crept. Another whispered order, and we had cut down our speed to slow, till we seemed to be hardly moving at all, creeping along like a punt in a backwater. I stood close to the gunner, thrilled and fascinated as we progressed almost stealthily towards the great beast. No big game hunting could equal this, I told myself then. I had forgotten the rolling of the ship, the smells, the dirt; all that mattered was the hunt, staged

in these desolate green waters at the beginning of a timeless day. Everything else had been absorbed by the excitement that was effervescing inside me. I have found that man always experiences tense excitement on coming in sight of a dangerous wild animal. Here surely was a setting for an unusual drama—a small ship on a heaving swell, and a great monster of the deep.

It seemed as if the whale had sensed our arrival. He went down for what seemed to be an excessively long time, when we were only about three hundred yards away. We kept on our course, nosing steadily towards the spot of the last blow. The skipper was gambling on his experience. The animal might have changed his course under water, and blow again five or six hundred yards away, or he might emerge right under our stern.

Five minutes must have passed, as we hung resolutely to our course, with the engine just ticking over to provide the necessary way.

All at once I was almost startled to shouting out with surprise. There was a mighty roar—not more than sixty yards away. I was conscious of the air to windward being darkened by a great mass of spray, of a nauseating smell suddenly obliterating the tang of the ocean, and there, plainly visible, looking very much like a giant submarine awash, was the whale.

But he had altered his course, and was going away from us. The skipper, a grim expression on his tensed mouth, slewed his gun around like a maxim, but he could not obtain a useful shot. A slight turn of his head to the man behind him, and a whispered order. We changed our course, and the whale came up again, this time hopelessly out of range.

Another order from the skipper, and we twisted

round with the agility of a coursing dog, heading towards the last blow, only to find ourselves further away from our quarry. For an hour or so we chased these elusive blows, which came at intervals of five minutes, each accompanied by a tremendous roar that sounded uncannily exciting to my unpractised ears.

Finally there was a noise like an explosion, almost under our noses. The whale was up again—this time within thirty yards. The skipper was aiming at it all the time, but he never seemed to fire. Would he never pull the trigger, I thought, with all the anxious impatience of a novice. I was sure the whale would submerge and we should lose him. Trembling with excitement I watched every movement of the gun, as he sighted it. He must surely fire this time! But no, he altered his position again. All the time we were getting nearer to the whale.

I had an impression of the creature's enormous black bulk, and was straining forward to see if I could notice any details, when there was a deafening roar at my side and a column of smoke enveloped us. The explosion was so sudden—I had been so concentrated on the whale, that I had forgotten the gun—and I nearly fell overboard.

What followed was unforgettable. For an instant the whale seemed to leap out of the water, to swamp back again with a tremendous thrashing of its tail. I looked at the skipper, not daring to speak. The only sound was the quick hiss of the rope of the harpoon flicking away into space. Then from the whale came a dull thud, as if someone had thwacked its great flanks with a plank. I learnt afterwards that that was the explosion of the shell in the harpoon point, which

had burst according to plan when the spear-head had pierced the animal's body.

It was then I realised the extreme skill of this skipper-gunner. If you can imagine trying to use a shot-gun in a rowing boat being agitated by someone, you can get some idea of the skill required in whaling, but add to this that the gunner is using a harpoon, and is aiming at a moving object, then you can imagine that he deserves any reward that may be going.

I was keyed up to bursting point. In my excitement I forgot the law of silence. "Got him!" I cried excitedly. But had we? The skipper's face was a blank. He seemed to be watching the effect on the harpoon as if deciding whether the shot had been vital or not. Suddenly he came to life.

"Astern!" he shouted ignoring the speaking tube. Immediately the silence was banished. Men appeared from everywhere as if by magic, and the deck seemed all at once crowded with industry. How anyone could sleep while the hunt was going on I cannot imagine, but I believe that some of the crew were actually resting below waiting until they heard the skipper's "Astern."

The whale line was still sizzling out at an incredible speed. Soon the winch brakes began to hiss under the strain, and the blocks danced about as if they were demented.

Quick as number one of any gun crew, a man dashed forward with a new gun loading, and fixed a new harpoon into the gun, attaching to it a spare line. In the shortest possible time everything was ready.

Hundreds of yards of the original rope had been played out. It seemed to me that quite half a mile had gone, half a mile of taut, glistening cable,

with a mad, blowing monster at its end, pitting its strength against that of the ship.

No salmon on a line ever gave me a hundredth of the excitement of this gigantic fishing adventure. The procedure was the same as playing a fish; the mast of the ship acting as the rod, and the cable, which has a circumference of about six inches, being the line, the winch being the reel.

Slowly the ship moved forward slackening the line for an instant, and the whale came to the surface again many hundreds of yards away, blowing furiously.

The skipper gave the order to heave-to. Immediately the winch began to screech as the line wound in; until the massive whale set off again at great speed, and the line went tearing after it like a mad thing. A pause; and again the winch tightened the rope; again the whale made off with it.

Soon I noticed that the ship was being towed by the whale. For an hour the fight went on. Occasionally the skipper exerted his engine against the animal, and always after each encounter the line was shortened. I could see that the whale's movements were becoming more laboured as the distance between it and the ship decreased. It was a game, fighting this huge animal, never relenting from the struggle, but always being remorselessly drawn in by the gigantic line. How many miles we covered during this fight I cannot say. I was thrilled beyond words at having a close-up of what must be the most thrilling water sport in the world. Watching the tactics of the skipper with his tiny vessel and his harpoon gun, I was tempted to cast my mind back to the old days when reckless men hunted these mammoths of the sea in small boats and threw harpoons by hand.

Their valour seemed incredibly amazing, even from this slight experience.

Another half an hour of this prodigious playing backwards and forwards, and the whale was quite close. Bang! The skipper had fired his second harpoon. The sight was unforgettable—and to me a suddenly revolting one. As the huge animal fought valiantly in his extremity, the blood gushed out in a mighty fountain, turning the sea into a shambles of crimson red.

I didn't like it! Now that the sport of the chase was over my keenness was replaced by an intense remorse. I felt sick and nauseated as the mighty animal's convulsions ceased, and it gradually sank below the surface. At an order from the skipper the lines were hove in, and the carcass was brought to the surface. Here again I was to appreciate the difficulties that must have beset the old-time whaler. My ship was fitted with every modern appliance that industry could command.

The skipper had told me that whales sank at death and I was wondering how they were going to cope with this vast dead weight, when I noticed a man shove a lance into the stomach. Closer inspection revealed that this was in reality an air duct, by means of which the stomach was inflated.

The kill had attracted innumerable gulls, which circled around uttering hideous cries, as if lamenting the death of their comrade. The blood-stained sea had also attracted a veritable army corps of sharks. The sea seemed to be absolutely alive with them. They came swimming up to the carcass, and darting up at it after the fashion of minnows attacking a slice of bread casually thrown into a river.

The skipper seemed more than pleased with the morning's work. He told me the animal was well over a hundred tons in weight. I paced out his length as best I could, and found it to be approximately eighty feet.

Regardless of the menacing sharks, the lascars were down on the inflated body, hacking off the flukes of the huge tail, preparing the body for towing. A whale has to be towed tail first, because there is no place to which to attach a chain on the head, and also because the head sinks and has a tendency to act as a brake, which would make progress impossible.

The operation of securing it took a long time. The smell was awful. The sight of the water, dappled with oil and blood, was nauseating. Everywhere was grease and filth. I pulled and strained at meaningless ropes, and did everything I could, with the utter incompetence of a landsman. My spirit was right, anyhow, and these toughened, hardy seamen directed my efforts with many a laugh. Once I nearly fell in to make a meal for the sharks. I slipped, and lay scrambling helplessly on the slimy deck, realising how easy it would have been to slither overboard and how difficult it was to remain. The captain grabbed me and helped me to my feet with one of those grim little smiles of his.

Eventually we hove to, or about, or whatever the nautical term for "turn round" is, and set off back to front, the whale securely attached to the stern by a stout chain. By this time I had got over my revulsion at the blood. I wanted to enjoy another thrilling chase.

"Are we going back?" I pleaded piteously to the skipper.

By way of answer he pointed across the sea.

“Do you see that cloud there?”

I looked and saw a low, flat, dark cloud on the southern horizon.

“It’s going to blow like hell in six hours,” he said briefly, and gave orders for full speed ahead.

I knew that he had learnt his whaling amidst the terrors of the Antarctic in the early days. If he said it was going to blow, it certainly was not going to be a children’s party—so I said no more. I had seen something I had never seen before, and had been through an experience which may never come my way again.

Darkness fell like a swiftly drawn shutter, and three hours before we reached harbour a gigantic gale sprang up. It really was a shocker. With anyone but my capable companion and his sturdy crew I might have felt alarmed. We seemed all at once to be staggering through towering walls of green water, which slapped themselves against our sides as we crashed up their seemingly unscalable heights. Was this going to be more of an adventure than the whale-hunting itself? I asked myself. The captain looked serious enough. I staggered to the hatch and peered out into the howling turmoil. Great frothing troughs were splitting their gigantic rollers, and the little ship was gallantly going through every possible contortion. How the hands laughed to see me being flung all over the place! I was not sick, however. That was my triumph!

After two hours incredible battling with the storm, which ceased as suddenly as it began, we reached the quay, which was packed with people interested in the return of the ship. The majority were natives, but among them were a few whites from the whaling factory.

Scarcely had the little ship touched port when

the process of turning the whale into marketable commodities began. A pair of huge chains were fastened round the two ends of the monster, and a screeching donkey engine drew it up a slipway onto a wide float on railway lines. Out of the darkness came a railway engine, hissing and blowing like some fussy and ponderous official, and in a very short space of time the whale had disappeared into the shadowed distance, leaving behind it only its addition to that unbelievable smell that had been with me ever since I had set foot on the quay.

Such was my one experience of whaling, and I knew, apart from the little blow at the end which had alarmed me so, that it was fair weather whaling, but it gave me some idea, just a faint taste of the terrible hardships of the game in the frozen Antarctic.

The passage of twenty-four hours had made the Norwegian skipper and myself good friends. When I said goodbye to him, he wrung my hand warmly and told me that I had brought him luck, and that he would like me to come out with him again. Whaling men are insuperably superstitious. I was taken aback when he asked me if I had a shilling. I knew he earned at least four figures a year, but in the request there was that degree of seriousness which made it appear really urgent.

I produced a coin. He took it with a smile, and flipped it in the air.

"I'll put it on my watch-chain!" he explained, "and my luck'll be always in with yours."

We sat yarning in the cabin till dawn and then went ashore to a welcome bath, but the smell of whales lingered for many days, much to the amusement of my friend who had given me the introduction. Still, it was worth it!

CHAPTER V

Malamala

FOUR weeks after my arrival at Durban, with a prospect of a good road ahead, I left for Johannesburg.

It was from Johannesburg I obtained my first experience of big game hunting in Africa. At Durban I met a very keen and knowledgeable hunter who owns a large tract of country adjoining the famous Sabie Game Reserve. If you want to observe game in the Union under their natural conditions, this is the place to do so. It is two hundred miles long and forty miles wide, and contains examples of nearly every kind of game to be found in Africa, south of the Equator.

My friend Mr. William Campbell has vast experience in hunting, and no one in the Union has done more for true sport than he.

His estate is very carefully protected, and is only shot over some six weeks in the whole year. I joined him at a permanent hunting camp situated over the Sands river.

It was here that I first learned to understand the full joys of life in a hunting camp, also the art of spooring African animals and to enjoy the pleasures and excitements of shooting in the thick bush. And then, after a long day, the interest and contentment of sitting round a camp fire at sundowner time, comparing notes on the day's sport, and later again, in a large circular reed fenced enclosure round a great log fire—dinner

under the stars, to the accompaniment of the incessant singing of crickets, the croakings of frogs down by the river, the barks of jackals and the melancholy howl of hyenas, the frightened scream of the zebra, or the whistle of a reedbuck; and then suddenly, away on the distant hills the most magnificent sound of all, the roar of a lion. To anyone who is fond of nature, these sounds are inseparable from an African night, and without which everything would seem unreal.

I saw plenty of sable antelope, waterbuck, zebra, impala, wildebeest, bush buck and reedbuck.

Naturally, I was on tenterhooks to see a lion. I had heard them roaring at night. My excitement was so intense that the desire to catch even a glimpse of the king of beasts became an obsession.

I had never really wanted to shoot non-dangerous game, so I very soon lost interest in hunting buck and antelope. I was after lion—the King of the Forest.

My friend whetted my appetite by telling me that there were quite two thousand lions in the Sabie Reserve. They were no good to me, I thought, with bitter eagerness. During one of those memorable evenings gathered round the flickering camp fire under the stars, with that licence allowed to every good hunter, he told me things that made my eyes literally bulge with eagerness.

Apparently Sabie lions frequently tired of the reserve, and would come out in “prides” or “troops” to raid the cattle on the neighbouring farms. A pride can be anything up to ten or even more lions.

All cattle in the area are kraaled at night behind a stockade of trees and branches tightly laced together. These kraals, however high, offer little

protection against the lion on the scent of cattle. He may climb over the top, sniff out a weak spot and claw his way through, or rashly crash headlong through the stockade itself.

I can still remember the sensation tingling in my mind as my friend was giving me these facts.

He had stopped talking, and I was just about to put a question to him, when there came to my inexperienced ears an incredibly thrilling sound that seemed to reverberate on the nearby night-shrouded hills. It was answered almost immediately by another one more distant, and then another, until all at once the night seemed to be torn in several places by those ominous rumblings. Lions roaring! I was thrilled to a degree of madness. Those challenging roarings coming out of the darkness roused my hunting instinct to the keenest pitch. I wanted to leap up then and there and go on the trail.

But I had a lot to learn. My friend told me there are two ways of getting lions. The most common is to discover a lion's kill, and to build a platform in a tree or to make a hide on the ground, and to wait during the night for the lion to come back to his unfinished meal. A variation of this way is to put down your own kill, after having dragged portions of it about to make a suitable scent trail.

The other way is to find their drinking places, and to follow their spoor at the first stroke of dawn when, after a heavy feed and drink, the beasts may move more slowly. It is sometimes possible to catch up with them before they get into the deep fastnesses of the impenetrable bush.

This second method, to my way of thinking, is the real hunting. You have to be a first-class tracker.

Most animals in Africa drink either at sundown, or just before dawn. The hunter who would meet with any success must be away before it is light.

My friend lent me two boys, Sixpence and Shilling. Although I could not speak a word of their language and they not a word of mine, we were soon on terms of understanding. The African boy uses signs for everything. You soon learn to do the same thing without loss of dignity.

My first experience of hunting with those two boys remains a most vivid memory. Shortly before dawn I was aroused by the house boy to find two shadowy figures wrapped in blankets waiting outside the hut. One was leaning on a long spear. The other was carrying a dangerous-looking hunting knife with a blade a foot long.

They both gave me a welcoming smile of friendliness. I picked up my rifle and stepped out into the keen, biting air. I could not help wondering what were their real thoughts about this new hunter.

We set off down a path which led through the bush to the river. The boy with the spear went first, then the knife carrier and myself, very much alert, very cold, my nerves tensed to straining point. It was half light when we came to the river, flowing indolently between steep sandy banks. Here and there the cold, pale morning showed me wide pools and sandy flats. Immediately we struck the open river bank a magical change came over the boys. They were no longer out for a walk, as I might have gathered by their previous gait. They were hunters! It seemed that some strange affinity between themselves and the wild had manifested itself. They were casting about like eager game dogs.

I soon noticed that the sundry tracks made by

impala, sable, zebra or wildebeest, or the minute pad mark of a cat or a jackal, meant nothing to them. They were skimming them as one does the pages of a too familiar book. I had always been keen on tracking things. Here was a veritable mecca. I am sure no two boys ever had a more enthusiastic pupil.

As we followed along the river bank, peering into every inch of sand, the boys would name each spoor in kitchen-kaffir.

They walked along in happy attitudes, their heads bent down, their eyes concentrated on the sand, always pointing out the spoors with their fingers. Suddenly I was thrilled. Sixpence had stopped, poised like a pointer. His hand was within a foot of the ground.

"Simba," he said, grinning from ear to ear, as if with professional pride. "Simba."

I followed the direction of his finger, and saw the unmistakable imprint of a big pad. Even my uneducated eye knew what it was. I was looking at my first lion spoor. I was agog with curiosity, and cursed myself for not being able to question them in their own language. With my customary impatience I wanted to know a hundred things. How old was the spoor? Had we a chance of getting up with him?

While I was hesitating and feeling an utter fool because of my ignorance, these nimble boys were running round in circles like mad things, making high-pitched noises as each discerned a fresh mark. "Eee—EEE" they kept squeaking. I gathered from their actions that the lion had gone down to drink and wandered about, his spoor crossing others.

Suddenly Sixpence stopped short. He had found a slight scratch on the slope of the bank. In an instant he had disappeared into the bush. The other followed him silently ; I went after him, wading through the dew still shimmering on the coarse grass.

This particular spoor zig-zagged through the bush. The boys followed it with silent concentration. Sometimes they pushed along at great speed ; sometimes they halted as if puzzled. I was trying to follow the spoor on my own account. Once I found it when they were nonplussed. I had my reward in their smiling appreciation.

So I went on after those eager boys, my fingers numbed to the bone by the biting morning chill, until the sun suddenly appeared over the bush-covered horizon with magical effect. The cold was rapidly banished by the warmth of its beneficent rays ; the dew disappeared almost as quickly. The African day had begun !

One's first spoor is a memorable experience. This one led on steadily away from the river towards the bush-covered slopes of the distant mountain range. Sometimes it passed through small and sudden clearings, where I noticed that the smaller animals had stopped to graze. I noticed a graceful impala gazing steadfastly at us as he still lingered on his last feed before returning to the jungle. A great sable bull, with his long scimitar horns, took sudden fright and crashed his way through the undergrowth. A little further on, we successfully negotiated our way unseen past a herd of wildebeest with their attendant zebra sentinels.

Gripped in the excitement of the chase, I became more observant at each step. Once, looking through the bush, I found myself almost face to face with

a gracefully poised little head. Its tender dark brown eyes were looking straight into mine with a suspicious inquiring expression. Save for a slight twitching of the delicately tinted nostrils he was as motionless as a statue, ears cocked rigidly forward, eyes shining brightly. I returned his fascinated stare. He seemed to be summing me up, uncertain as to whether I meant danger or not ; and then he emitted a shrill whistle, turned, and darted off at lightning speed into the safety of the distant undergrowth.

It was a reedbuck.

By this time the sun was steadily mounting in the eastern sky, and the bird life of the bush was making itself noticeable. Vivid blue jays, glossy feathered starlings, many-coloured cuckoos, and stout-billed barbets, to name only a few varieties, began to flit from branch to branch, livening the morning with their distinctive cries.

Constantly we disturbed great turkey buzzards. They looked very like turkeys, but are really hornbills. They prefer to run, but when forced to fly, flop off with clumsy wingbeats through the bush.

It was here that I met that unwelcome companion of the spoorer—the “go-away” bird. He is an impudent customer, who dogs your path, uttering his raucous cry, so like the words “go-away,” that it has become his label. He is almost impossible to get rid of, and makes it his business to warn the other denizens of the forest that some stranger is with them. He fulfils the role of the jay and blackbird in an English wood.

The higher the sun rises, the more the babel increases. Magpies and jackdaws begin to chatter. Looking back over towards the river, I noticed a great white-necked fish-hawk wheeling round in sinister circles, looking for its prey beneath.

We followed the spoor until the sun was immediately overhead. We had been hunting for six solid hours, but I had lost all count of time or hunger, and it was not until Sixpence stopped short outside a dense clump of undergrowth and made an expression of abject unhappiness that I realised the lion had got into this impenetrable undergrowth, where no hunter in the world could get at him.

The boy's expression told me enough. I was acutely disappointed, but only for a moment; and then I remembered I was infernally tired.

The hunt was over. I lit my pipe, gave my faithful instructors each a cigarette, and immediately began to long for camp and food. But where was the camp? I was completely lost. The boys, however, seemed to know exactly where they were and set off at a sharp pace through the puzzling bush, as if they knew every inch of the way.

We walked back as friends. The bond of hunting had grown between us. The boys had taken to me. They were at great pains to teach me the names of the various animals. First Sixpence, and then Shilling, would stop at a spoor and, looking at me to make sure I was listening, would intone the Kaffir name for the animal with an exaggerated dumb show. By the time we got back to camp I had learned quite a number of names from my friendly instructors.

Later on I noticed that zebra and wildebeest were always to be found together. I think the reason for this is mutual protection. The former have the keener sense of smell and hearing, but the latter, when attacked by a lion, will form themselves into a phalanx. Possibly the zebra feels security in being close to a massed herd, whilst the wildebeest welcome an active sentinel.



Africa does not bury her dead

Vultures with a Wildebeest



Wildebeest and Zebra sentinels



Dawn at the drinking pool

Wildebeest, Waterbuck and Zebra



W. A. Campbell, one of the best sportsmen in S. Africa

Afterwards we went out at dawn every day. My knowledge of spooring increased considerably. At the best of times lion spooring is no easy task. Even after finding a trail, a good deal depends on luck whether one drops on the animal in the open. Despite repeated attempts, we were never fortunate enough to do this.

I was yearning to get, or at least to see, a lion, and so decided to sit over a kill. Only once, after many fruitless and chilly nights spent perched in a tree platform, did a lion come anywhere near my kill.

That particular morning, as dawn broke, I noticed that the vultures were circling round a spot about a mile away. On going up to investigate, I found the remains of a freshly killed zebra. All around was lion spoor. Nothing remains dead for long without catching the eyes of the vultures. From terrific heights in the air, at regular intervals, they descend in long strings to the scene of the kill, and in a very short time nothing remains of the carcass except bones, picked as white as if they had been scrubbed.

Vultures are of considerable use to the lion hunter. By watching these birds one is often able to locate a lion kill, and thus avoid much trouble and hard work.

The vultures found this kill for me. The entrails had been taken out and buried. Lions often do this. Sixpence showed me the distinct spoor of two animals. While the boys were making a platform in a conveniently placed tree, I went off to try and get another bait.

Dawn is the best time to hunt in Africa. Nearly every animal feeds and drinks at night. Antelopes and buck graze on the open spaces and vleis and drink in the rivers or waterholes shortly after dusk, or again just before dawn. At daybreak

they retire into the bush, where they lie up during the heat of the day.

I soon came on the spoor of wildebeest, and following it for some little way, found a herd of about thirty accompanied by a few zebra in a small clearing. Zebra is good lion bait, and I quickly bagged one.

We cut up the zebra and dragged the portions with ropes, made out of bark strippings, to the original kill we had found. It took several journeys to remove the whole carcass. In so doing we made an excellent scent trail for the lion. Having done this, we covered the whole heap with branches to keep off the vultures, and returned to camp, some four miles away, for a wash and a rest, preparatory to the night's vigil.

I left camp about 4.30 p.m. with Sixpence and Shilling, carrying blankets and food. By 6 p.m. I was safely installed on the platform in a tree. The boys removed the brushwood from the bait and went happily off, leaving me alone to watch through the night.

To be alone in the bush through an African night, with its bewildering variety of noises and sounds, is an unforgettable experience. To sit over a kill, waiting for a lion, is a thousand times more thrilling. One's nerves, normally tautened by the uncanny loneliness, become stretched to a pitch that is almost excruciating. I was wearing a leathern waistcoat, a thick tweed coat, and had wrapped myself in a warm blanket. An African winter night can be infernally cold.

Before night fell, I was very much occupied fixing a long electric torch over the back sight of the rifle, and adjusting it so that when switched on I could see the sights aligned, and the foresight clearly illuminated.

Thus started a memorable night !

African night comes quickly. From my perch I watched the sun drop behind the bush-covered horizon, lighting the western sky with a blood-red hue. Immediately afterwards a chilliness and an eerie drabness came creeping over the landscape. Great carnivorous birds, hawks, crows and eagles, came trooping down to roost from their day's killing, uttering weird and disconcerting cries. A high tree to my left became literally crowded with sinister vultures, squabbling and fighting among themselves for a foothold on the branches. On another was a solitary white-necked fish hawk. I also detected my friend, the "Go-away" bird, adding his voice to that strange concert.

The redness in the West soon disappeared. The bush became suddenly intensely opaque. I looked up. The sky was now almost black, with the stars scintillating like brilliant jewels. The sudden transformation and the impressive stillness of everything awed me strangely. My senses became more acutely active with each minute, especially my hearing. I found myself straining to intensify the slightest sound. I felt a puny thing, alone with the immensity of nature. Oddly enough, I began to think of civilisation. It was probably Henley week. People in London would be hurrying away from cocktail parties, to arrive home late for dinner, while I, perched in a tree and wrapped in a blanket, was keeping watch over a partially dried up, reed-flanked river bank, with bush covered ground rising beyond.

I started up suddenly from my reverie. A bark split the silence—a jackal's—followed immediately by the melancholy wail of a hyena away up in the bush across the river ; good signs enough to double

my alertness. Both these creatures follow the lion on his hunting. Then there came the startled whistle of a reed-buck, very close. What had frightened him? As if in answer to my unspoken question came a stampeding of many startled feet crashing through the bush. What had frightened them? Were they wildebeest, zebra or impala? From my perch I could suddenly sense the nervous tension which all animals in a lion country are subject to at night.

Hours passed by, until suddenly, across the river, the stillness of the night was shattered by the long rumbling roar of a lion. That first awe-inspiring sound was almost immediately answered by another roar, which seemed to me to be away right high up on the hillside. Then a period of stillness and tensity stole over the bush. Night drew on and the coldness of the air intensified. The stars appeared even brighter. The silence was so complete that I could hear myself breathing, all too loudly, it seemed. Then suddenly close, down by the river bed, came a shrieking, frenzied scream, followed by a galloping of hooves and the sound of bodies crashing through the bushes. The shriek was the death cry of a zebra. A lion had sprung on it at the drinking hole. I heard the dull sound made by the fall of a body, and the low snarling of the lion as he commenced his feed.

I cursed these zebra! They were close to the trail I had made during the day by dragging the bait along. This lion had accidentally come across the zebra drinking as he was following the scent to my bait.

The kill had fully awakened the night. The hyenas announced their arrival by snarling and fiendish laughter. Every now and then the lion

would snarl. One could picture him turning and scaring away these craven scavengers from his food. Somewhere away up on the right another lion was calling.

Hours dragged by. I was beginning to wonder how long the lion would stay at his kill, when suddenly he emitted a full-throated roar. It was answered by another immediately away on the right. The roar of a lion one hundred yards away in the stillness of the night, is a thrill. I heard him get up. Soon he came trampling through the reeds, caring nought for the noise he made, with a sort of contempt for the world as befits the king of the bush. I could even hear his pads getting closer, and knew instinctively that he was coming straight towards my bait. Excited beyond description, I lay flat on the platform, hardly daring to breathe, gripping my rifle anxiously.

I knew I should have to let him stop at my bait to be sure of getting a steady shot, but would he stop after a feed of his own? It was pitch dark. I could still hear him, but I could not see him, close as he was. Then suddenly, some twenty yards away, I discerned the vague suggestion of an object moving straight to the bait. It was the lion! He came right up to the bait. If he stopped, then my luck was in.

To my intense chagrin he merely sniffed loudly at the meat, and moved slowly on. He had probably eaten enough of his own kill down by the river.

My chance was now or never. I pressed the button of my light. Its lens split the inky darkness of the night with a pencil of bright white light. I was too late!

The lion had passed the bait. My light showed me his yellow-brown body, his heavy gorged

stomach dragging almost on the ground, his tail drooping lazily. With hardly a glance in my direction he disappeared behind the bush.

I had to be content with remaining in my perch, listening to him trampling his way through the undergrowth, and committing to memory that splendid first sight of the King of the Beasts.

You may ask why I did not shoot. We had been careless in choosing the position of the bait. It was too near another tree. What had happened was that the beams of my torch were reflected back from the boughs of this tree. In consequence, my vision was blurred and my light was almost useless. I could have shot, but the odds against killing the beast were very heavy. It is the craziest folly to shoot at dangerous game unless one is sure of hitting a vital spot, which is an exceedingly small target.

Nearly all the fatal accidents to hunters have been brought about through dangerous game carelessly shot at and wounded. A careless hunter is a cruel hunter.

You can imagine my feelings, having missed my first lion. I could hear him provokingly roaring his way up the hillside. After a little while there came to my ears another roar, quite different in tone. He had met his lioness mate. I could picture them going off together, well beyond my reach.

With the first gripping tension relaxed, I began to shiver, and found almost with surprise that I was cold. I had forgotten such a minor detail. It was useless to think of getting down until after the sun was up, so I lay still through those cold hours that precede the dawn.

I was heartily glad when the familiar tinge of silvery grey colour illuminated the sky in the east,

making the dense blackness of the bush on the hilltop stand out in strong relief.

The grey light climbed into the sky, and immediately the stars disappeared, the birds woke up. Their raucous cries made me thoroughly awake and on the alert again. The drowsiness that had followed on the heels of my disappointment vanished instantly with the warming promise of a new day.

The birds waste no time in getting to work. The vultures flopped clumsily off the tree at my left and made for the remains of the lion's kill by the waterside. High in the sky I saw their companions, who must have risen even earlier. They were tiny black dots wheeling in the sky at a terrific height, sweeping round and round in ever enlarging circles, scouring the earth beneath for their breakfast. I was amazed that these birds who, when close to the ground, seem to lop through the air in a kind of clumsy, stumbling gait, could become such superb masters of wingmanship in the upper heavens.

Fascinated, I watched this aerial circus. Suddenly one dropped, floating down with the precision of a heavily weighted parachutist on a calm day. The others followed, taking almost exactly the same downward route. The swooping circle above soon emptied itself, in a long string, to be followed by others, apparently from nowhere, which flopped steadily down on to the remnants of the lion's banquet.

The warming rays of the sun were very welcome. Presently I heard whistling from the bush. My boys had come back. I noticed they had reached the lion's kill when the vultures, disturbed from their meal, flopped their gorged, disgruntled selves into the boughs of the nearby trees.

There was no need for me to tell the story of the night. Sixpence and Shilling had read the spoor as they came. They broke into the clearing like excited spaniels, running and turning here and there, pointing to the spoor the lion had made when he had disdained the meal I had offered him. Their two solemn black faces looked up at me, as if to say, "Well, what about it? Lion's gone."

In the few words of native language I had assimilated, supplemented by a sign language of my own, I tried to explain what had happened. The black faces began to grin.

Shilling began to chatter. Although I could not understand everything that was said, I did gather that the impudent young rascal had met hunters before who had been too frightened to shoot at a lion!

This really was the last straw. I leapt out of the tree and threatened to give him a good hiding, much to the amusement of the other boy, who was busy making a fire. I more than enjoyed the steaming tea they had brought me, and while they delightedly cut themselves pieces of oderiferous meat from the bait, and roasted them in the wood embers, we soon became firm friends.

I gathered from their smiling approval that as far as they were concerned "Boss" was a good fellow, even if he had missed the lion.

While at Malamala I had my first experience of hunting wounded lion, as exciting a pastime as any man can undertake.

Normally, the lion avoids the human. Wounded, he is savage and courageous to an amazing degree, often lying in wait for his pursuers.

A "pride" of lions had raided a large farm nearby. It happened while the manager was

away, but with the amazing luck that sometimes goes to the novice, an elderly friend staying at the farm, who had never even seen a lion before, immediately put up a platform over one of the dead cattle, and actually killed three lions and wounded another between the hours of dusk and dawn.

Kirkman, the manager of the farm, looked a typical hunter. He had steel blue eyes and a rigid, open face, and proved himself to be a fine fearless hunter, with an inestimable amount of cold courage. He very kindly sent over and asked me if I would like to come along with some dogs and join in the hunt for this wounded animal.

I went over immediately, and we soon got on the scene of last night's affair. Kirkman's skill at spooring was equal to that of the natives. His eyes missed nothing, but this trail was a difficult one and exceptionally hard to follow. We lost it many times. Even the eager dogs could not make much headway. After about an hour's fruitless searching, we noticed that one dog insisted on bearing away to the left. He would keep running excitedly backwards and forwards from a wide, dense thicket. We put the other dogs on, and they did exactly the same thing. Soon they were all standing round this patch, quivering with excitement. Occasionally one of them would run back to us with an air of saying: "We have found him! Now go in and do your job."

We approached cautiously. The thicket was about one hundred and fifty yards long and thirty yards wide. As we surrounded it the dogs started barking madly, but although we peered into the denseness we could see nothing.

Kirkman showed amazing nerve. He knew more than any one of us the extreme danger of going

into thick bush after a wounded lion, which can hide itself completely and spring at lightning speed. Without a moment's hesitation he went straight into the bush, his rifle held low at the ready. Suddenly there was a roar. He was within ten yards of the lion. Even then he could not see it. It gave another roar and sprang. I think the dogs must have distracted its attention, for instead of charging Kirkman, it came out towards the other two of us at incredible speed. Kirkman fired the first shot into its rump, and we fired simultaneously two vital shots at about ten yards' range.

Four lions in one day would send the average hunter into ecstasies of delight, but the most unconcerned person was our middle-aged friend who had hit them all, and treated the whole incident as calmly as if he did it every day of his life.

Shortly after this, I left this delightful camp, and journeyed back to Johannesburg where I spent a few days.



The King of the Bush



Lion platform



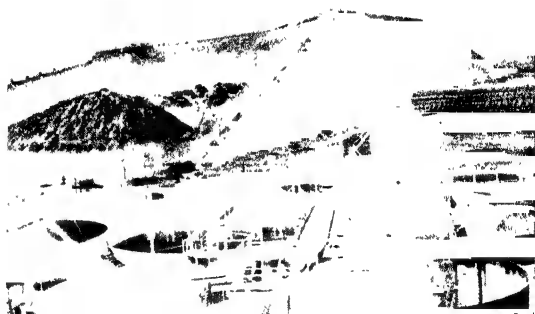
Lioness



most intrepid lion hunter
J. Kirkman spooring a wounded lion



Typical Ox Wagon Note boy at head of leading span



City Deep Mine

Cyanide Tanks and Slime Heap



The cold of dawn



Hunting boys cooking breakfast

CHAPTER VI

Lions

AT Johannesburg I stayed at the famous Rand Club.

The members gave me a wonderful time, and packed my days with recreation. There's one question I would like to ask these kind friends. Why do they still refuse to play Contract Bridge, and still stick to the exceedingly dull game of Auction? I had not expected to find such extreme conservatism in Johannesburg. Perhaps by now they have allowed Mr. Culbertson's book to come into the Club.

I was particularly anxious to see the workings of one of the great gold mines, the white, dusty, slag heaps of which are such a noticeable feature of the surroundings of Johannesburg. A kind friend motored me over to one of the mines about seven miles out of town.

There is nothing more impressive in the world from an engineering and scientific point of view than the working of the gold fields. I spent two days going over this particular mine, worked by native labour under white supervision.

The enormous winding tackles which lower great cages, at forty to fifty miles per hour, thousands of feet below the surface of the earth, with a smoothness and absence of noise that is astounding; the workings of the mines below the surface, sometimes to a depth of more than 7,500 feet, and the organisation and cleanness of this gigantic under-

taking take one's breath away in admiration and wonder.

And again, on the surface, the great crushers which pound the rock to the most minute powder, the catching of the gold on the corduroy sheets, its refinement by various methods, the great cyanide tanks which hold gold in solution until it is eventually deposited on zinc foil, which itself is dissolved in sulphuric acid leaving the gold behind, are but some of the few marvels of modern engineering and chemistry. I have never been impressed so much with anything in my life as with the workings of this mighty organisation which produces more than half the total output of the gold of the entire world.

I wonder if any town in the world of similar size to Johannesburg possesses as many brains. I doubt it.

The restless feeling of wanting to be off on the hunt after lions soon came over me again. If you have never done a long journey through a great Continent you cannot completely understand that feeling that comes over one of always wanting to be moving on. At dawn one morning I sneaked away from the city and my kind friends, and drove down towards the frontier of Portuguese East Africa.

At Malamala, I had heard of a good lion country over the Portuguese frontier. I am sorry I cannot tell you exactly where it was, which is a pity, because I found a great game country very little known, and almost unshot over.

It has always annoyed me, and seemed quite unnecessary, that in a great, wonderful country like Africa men should erect customs barriers and frontiers for the purpose of trade or international jealousy. The vast spaces of Africa are too

magnificent and utterly too grand to be desecrated by the pettiness of European rivalry. Colonies belonging to different nations may need barriers, but why these annoyances should exist between the various colonies of the British Empire passes imagination. It has been said, with much truth, that the so-called "All Red Route" from Capetown to Cairo becomes pinker and pinker the further it gets to the North, until one begins to wonder if one is a British subject at all. Officials are as frequent as prickly pear, and often seemingly as useless.

Anyhow, I had made up my mind to have as little as possible to do with Portuguese customs, police and district officers, but I did want to get into Portuguese East.

My first step was to find out where I should have to cross the Portuguese frontier. I had been warned I could expect to be delayed for hours, and maybe days, with passports and customs. I was scheming how I could avoid all this kind of nonsense, when I came upon a native village. Hearing my arrival, the inhabitants came pouring out of their mud huts to see what it was all about. The car was soon surrounded. I threw a few sweets to the curly-headed piccanins who immediately scrambled in the dust for them like chickens after corn. A few cigarettes for the men and we were on friendly terms.

There was one "boy" who stood head and shoulders above the rest of the crowd. I liked the look of him. By this time I was fairly proficient at making myself understood by signs. He was quick on the uptake, and came up immediately I beckoned him.

"Wapi Simba," I said in answer to his curious gaze, and repeated it slowly with considerable

emphasis. "Wapi Simba." That meant "Where is a lion?"

He listened with his head on one side, and all at once his smile announced that my question had penetrated his thick black skull.

"Lapa," he answered, rolling his eyes and pointing into the distant bush, "Lapa."

I set about engaging my selection, with much dumb play. I drew a passable picture of a lion on the back of a cigarette box and handed it to him. He looked at it with such a puzzled expression that I began to doubt whether my drawing conveyed anything to him. After about a minute he stopped scratching his head, and handed back the box. "Simba," he said, with all the pride of someone who had solved a very intricate riddle, "Simba."

I pointed my rifle at the distant hills. He grinned knowingly. Then I pointed to myself, to him, and again to the hills, to show him I wanted him to accompany me. He nodded his head. I showed him some money to convince him that he would not be expected to come for nothing—and Simon became my boy.

Simon was not really as simple as he looked. He soon understood why I wanted to avoid the customs barrier. That afternoon, having taken leave of the whole chattering village, he drove off beside me in my wonder cart smiling broadly. Within a mile or two of the boundary, I stopped the car and indicated to Simon that I wanted to enter the bush. He immediately went ahead, stopping here and there to blaze a tree with his knife. Thus we marked our way in. As far as possible I made him choose a route where I could persuade the car without a great deal of difficulty.

When it was almost dark, we bumped across

the frontier and followed the blazed trail until we came to a clearing at the side of a small river. We were not alone for long. The natives from an adjoining village, ever curious, came to gaze at the car. Feeling that these people might be useful allies, I sent Simon off to interview the headman.

He returned with a very old native, whose costume was practical simplicity itself, consisting of a loin cloth worn under a tattered old khaki coat. The headman was accompanied by his attendants, who gravely arranged themselves round their leader like a flock of penguins round their keeper.

Simon ranged them up before me, and then started his business. The newcomers solemnly watched his truly amazing dumb show without as much as the wink of an eyelash. He went through every conceivable action, pointing to me, to my rifle, to the bush. Sometimes he was imitating a buffalo pawing the ground, sometimes he was crawling through the grass like a lion.

The headman and his friends watched it all with the solemnity of children at a circus seeing acrobats for the first time. Then they in their turn began the most bewildering gesticulations. I was completely puzzled until I saw Simon smiling at me. That smile signified he had arranged everything.

The headman proved himself to be amazingly hospitable. My stores consisted merely of tea, flour, sugar, jam, a few tins of meat, and fruit. He insisted on augmenting these with chickens, eggs, and liberal supplies of milk. Simon produced another hunting boy, who was a capable cook. Other boys from the village made me a hut of branches, ingeniously tied together with bark strips.

That night I sat down to ruminate over the first camp fire of my own. I felt really lonely. The fire seems to be the only companion as one sits cross-legged smoking and thinking, gazing all the while into the flickering flames. I was one white man in a new and forbidden territory populated by strange natives. The nearest white officials, I hoped, did not even know of my presence. Anything might happen.

The first few minutes after nightfall convinced me I was in the middle of a district rich in game. My thoughts were constantly interrupted by roars of what seemed to be innumerable lions. Hyenas and jackals must have been on the prowl all night. I turned in to my little hut early, in eager anticipation of a good week's hunting.

I set out well before dawn the next morning with Simon and another boy leading the way across flat bush-covered country. We came to a partially dried-up river bed some few minutes before the sun appeared over the horizon. Following down the river bed, we soon hit on the track of one of the lions that had been drinking there during the night. Any hunter knows the excitement of following fresh lion spoor!

Suddenly the sun appeared, lighting up the yellow trunks of the thorn trees and driving away the chill of the dawn. We continued until the river bed widened out into a large, sandy curve. Suddenly Simon dropped to the ground in the greatest excitement. His mouth was twitching like a pointer's scenting a covey of grouse. Following the boy's example, I went down on all fours on to the wet ground and crawled the few yards up to him. He was pointing with his forefinger, his hand trembling with suppressed emotion. I soon realised the cause. Some fifty yards away,

just across a small sandy stretch, lying down in the first rays of the morning light, were a full-grown lion and a lioness. Softly I pulled across the safety catch, and sitting up with an elbow on each knee, trying resolutely to steady my nerves, took aim. Only after experience can the excitement and thrill of aiming at one's first lion be appreciated, but even then I remembered the words of that great hunter, Major W. M. Bell, who advises one always to count ten before firing. To make sure, I counted nearly thirty, I expect, before I fired. Even then I forgot the golden rule of taking the lioness first. I nearly paid dearly for making this mistake.

My aim had been good. I had put a bullet clean between the lion's eyes as he lay head on, and he hardly moved. In my excitement I forgot all about the lioness, until she bounded to her feet and whirled round to face us. She was immediately joined by two quarter grown cubs that came out from a bush. They diverted my attention and took up valuable seconds. With a terrifying snarl the lioness came straight at me. Both boys fled.

A lion charges with incredible speed, faster than the fastest race horse. The first bound covers a prodigious space. This one came streaking towards me. She seemed to be gliding along, stretched out close to the ground. I could see little more than her head.

My first shot was an excited, hurried one at about thirty yards' range. The bullet went high. Perhaps with some idea of flight in my mind I jumped to my feet and fired a second, not a split second too soon. She was almost on me by this time. The bullet hit her in the head. As I pulled the trigger I tripped over a root and fell into a

thick thorn bush, while the lioness lay fiercely clawing the earth within a yard or two of me.

An African thorn bush never lets go without a struggle. The presence of the lioness within a yard or two urged me to superhuman effort. I struggled wildly, and a few minutes later, bleeding profusely and badly torn, emerged on the other side. I gave the lioness another shot to finish her off, and called for the boys. They appeared cautiously from behind a bush. At the sight of the dead lioness they came rushing out laughing and clapping their hands, dancing round the victim and jabbering at me in their own language with evident approval of my success. The African native is a sportsman at heart, and once you have got his confidence there is little he won't do for you—except stand by you when dangerous game charges. I sympathise with him.

We soon skinned the lions and so back to camp for the day. I was naturally pleased at commencing with a "right and left," but I was all too conscious of the narrow escape I had. The incident was a striking demonstration of the hunting truth that when a lion and lioness are seen together, you must take the lioness first. A lion will not charge, or will slink away, but his mate will very often attack.

I shall never forget the speed with which a charging lion travels and the very small target it makes. It seems to show nothing except its head and a pair of paws, and glides over the ground like a flash. That well-known lion-hunter, Mr. Percival, who was unrivalled in the sport of galloping after lions on horseback, states that there has been no horse foaled to which a lion could not give twenty-five yards start in a hundred from a stand, and I can well believe it. I went to bed that night with a feeling that I had been distinctly lucky.

The next two days were spent in spooring more lions. We came across a considerable amount of fresh spoor, but in each case it led us into dense impenetrable bush, where any attempt to follow was out of the question.

Late on the second day Simon, who was surely the tallest native I had yet struck, came across the remains of a wildebeest which showed signs of having been killed by a lion the previous night.

There being no time to make a tree platform, I decided to make a hide on the ground. We had to work quickly. The natives cut down poles and dug them into the earth in the form of a circle, lashing brushwood lightly round the outside to make a shield. At the most it was a clumsy affair. Although it was a cover from view, it would have stood the shock of a charging animal about as effectively as would a matchbox. I had not got the torch, but the native boys had built the hide on slightly lower ground than the bait. I tried it out and found that a skyline was just visible which would enable me to get a silhouette.

It was close on sundown by the time all was ready. I kept Simon with me and sent the other back to camp with instructions to return at dawn with some food. We had nothing with us, and I knew we were in for a very cold and hungry wait during the long night. I was prepared to be chilled to the bone with no clothes on other than a shirt and a pair of corduroy trousers.

When the gloom descended on the bush as the sun dipped below the western horizon, we crawled into our shelter. I lit a last pipe, and gave Simon a cigarette. Our long wait had begun.

In some ways just after sunset is surely the most depressing hour in Africa. This time, however, my thoughts were so busy with expectant hope, and

my brain so active, observing and watching everything, that the gloom was lost on me. When darkness had fallen completely pipe and cigarette were extinguished. Our long vigil commenced. We lay close together, perfectly still.

There was not a sound, except for the continuous singing of crickets. You get so used to their eternal noise that you learn to concentrate on the slightest sound despite them. Suddenly, not more than ten yards away to the right, there was a slight rustle. Simon lightly touched me! Sitting on the platform had been exciting, but lying on the ground, protected only by the most flimsy "hide," was far more so. I hardly dared to breathe. Another slight noise. I could dimly discern two forms close to the bait.

"Simba?" I inquired of my black friend in hushed tones.

"No, hyenas," he whispered authoritatively. He was right. Almost immediately we could hear the sickening tearing of flesh as the pillagers tried to drag it away.

More of them arrived. Some passed so close to our hide that we could almost have touched them. The night silence was shattered by their growls and snarls as they bickered with each other over the meat. Soon the wily little jackals ran barking into this party, trying to secure their share. An unearthly pandemonium! I endured this bedlam with nervous disgust.

The hyenas would soon finish all the bait, and my wait would be useless. I was just turning over in my mind whether to shoot or shout to frighten them when, with a crash, some great body landed into the midst of the party. The shrieking hyenas scattered like chaff and dashed into the bush, snarling horribly. Uncertain as to what had

happened, thrilled and excited beyond words, I gripped my rifle. Within ten yards of me stood a great lion, dimly silhouetted against the skyline. He was quite unconscious of our presence. I could feel the boy beside me shaking with excitement. I was shaking too—shaking to the extent of uncontrollability.

Slowly the lion approached the bait. I heard his low grunts of satisfaction, and the champing noise of his mighty jaws as he tore at the meat. And then came the steady padding of more feet, with no attempt at quietness. Another lion appeared. The first one took no notice of him, as he walked straight up to the kill. Within a minute both were feeding together in complete harmony.

My nerves have never been more highly strung. I was alone in the African night with a boy and a .275 rifle in a crazy shelter fifteen yards from two lions. I raised my rifle. I could not see the sights properly; I daresay I was aiming and judging for several minutes before I dared to fire. I knew well the extreme danger of wounding, and wanted a clean kill with the first shot. Simon was becoming restless with excitement, and was longing for me to shoot, so judging as best I could the head of the nearest lion, I fired. There was a sudden snarl, but no sound of a struggle. The flames emitted from the barrel momentarily blinded me, and I could not see what had happened. When my eyes became reaccustomed, I could distinctly see a form standing up behind the kill. Which lion was this? Had I killed one or missed? All I could discern was what appeared to be the blurred mass of the bait.

I was not missing this second chance, and aiming at what I hoped to be the shoulder, fired again. This time there was a terrific roar, and I saw the

great dark bulk of the lion jump into the air, turn round several times, then plunge madly into the bush, where a smashing of the undergrowth, together with growling and snarling, continued for some time. Then all was strangely quiet.

"Have I killed them both?" I whispered to Simon.

"Yes, Boss," he said. "First lion dead, second lion I think dead, but not sure."

With the excitement over, the extreme cold gripped us. I do not think I have ever been so cold, not even during the war. To protect ourselves against the freezing temperature Simon and I huddled together for the remainder of the night.

The wait was intolerably long. The first streak of dawn revealed the form of a dead lion actually lying motionless across the bait. One was dead at any rate. As the light increased, and the red mounted higher and higher into the sky, we peered anxiously into the thicket in front of us. There was no sign of the second lion. Had I only wounded it? I still felt sure of my shot, but where was the beast? He might be close at hand, ready to spring out on us.

There was a tree close by, and immediately the sun came up over the horizon Simon leapt out of the hide and shinned up the tree. He had hardly got half way up when he gave a shout of joy and jumped down again, pointing wildly towards a bush on the other side of the bait. Seizing my rifle, I approached cautiously and soon saw the cause of his delight. Lying almost on his back against the bush was the second lion.

After skinning the two lions we made back to camp, to be met by the rest of the boys who greeted us with the greatest exuberance. For the rest of the day Simon described and acted what had

taken place through the night. His power of mimicry would make a West-end actor green with envy. His pantomime went on unceasingly. Long after nightfall, as I was sitting alone over my camp fire, he and his friends were squatting on their haunches round their own fire, still talking vociferously, arguing and laughing about my night's adventure.

CHAPTER VII

Buffalo

IT would have been churlish not to celebrate my good fortune with my boys. They were immensely pleased when on the way home I shot a buck for their supper, and gave them some money.

I was smoking an evening pipe after dinner when Simon's grinning face showed itself in the flickering light of the camp fire. He pointed to me, and then at the village, so I followed him. A few minutes later I was sitting on a petrol tin watching the weirdest and most sensual cabaret.

The whole village, their lithe brown bodies warmed by mealie beer, had assembled to celebrate the downfall of Simba, their dreaded enemy.

In the middle of a clearing, with a dusty surface almost like the tan of a circus ring, burnt a huge fire. Round it in a wide circle, their faces and oiled bodies glistening in the glow of the firelight, sat the entire village.

As my eyes became accustomed to the light I noticed that the women were on one side of the fire and the men on the other.

My arrival was the sign for the word "go." Suddenly the silence was broken by a burst of that weird sensuous harmony that only the African native can produce.

On my right the musicians began to beat the palms of their hands on hollowed out rounds of

wood covered with skin, producing a deep, drumming sound in a rhythm that seems to affect one's every sense. My first feeling was one of harmony, until this strange, vibrating music, never varying in its tempo, began to grip me, lulling my senses like some potent but pleasing drug. Then into it crept an erotic stimulation that threatened to set one's body moving to that insinuating rhythm, which suddenly got faster and faster, until in crescendo it seemed as if all the demons in the forest had mingled their voices in the rampaging music.

When the first burst stopped with a crash, leaving a bewildering gap of silence, the tribe began to sing. The song began in the same fashion as the music, a low moaning sound in perfect harmony. Later the volume swelled as the basses and altos took up their parts in the murmuring extravaganza.

Each of the hundred singers interpreted the cadence of the music by muscular movement. While some were content to sit on the dusty floor, swaying to and fro in harmony with the lilting syncopation—ininitely more syncopated than anything I have ever heard from the most elaborate jazz bands—others leapt up and began their shuffling round the fire.

First one and then another dancer joined in the fun. Their faces daubed with red ochre, and their bodies glistening with oil, lent them a weird, almost supernatural, appearance.

Soon a good twenty dancers were shuffling their feet in the dust, and the music began to speed up. The barbaric cadence of the drummers, some of whom were belabouring petrol cans, burst out afresh. Faster and faster whirled the dancers, lowering and raising their eloquent hands, twisting their

expressive bodies, throwing back their heads in expressive pantomime, until it seemed to me that they were completely possessed by the music. They existed no longer as separate entities, but were slaves to sound.

No one could fail to be moved by such a spectacle. I felt I had touched the very soul of barbarity revealing itself in a bizarre setting. Once again there came into my heart a sudden jab of anxiety at this stark contact with the unknown. I was a lone white man, in the heart of the bush, calmly sitting on a petrol tin watching these mysterious jungle rites. Supposing the natives got out of hand. That commanding orgy of music might revive a primitive loathing of the white invader in their savage hearts, and they might wreak some terrible vengeance on me.

I went back to my lonely hut with mixed feelings. When I woke just before dawn the celebration was still going on.

One morning Simon gave me some really exciting news. Nyati—the buffalo—is generally believed to be the most dangerous animal in the African bush. I had been idly drawing a picture of one when Simon came up. He immediately began to grin and roll his eyes. Again Nyati was “lapa”—further on. Simon knew where to go. We broke camp hurriedly, said good-bye to the natives, who immediately descended on the remnants of the camp like hungry jackals, and set off. Simon had chosen three boys to accompany me. They followed on foot, while he rode proudly beside me, gleefully conscious of his position.

All the time I was recalling what I had been told and had read about the buffalo. Acute of hearing, keen of smell and sight, and active as a cat, despite his enormous weight and clumsy

appearance, he is undoubtedly a beast worthy of a hunter's stalk.

I remembered bar yarns of the number of hunters that had been killed by these animals. It had been impressed on me that hunting them called for iron nerve and extreme accuracy of shooting.

Soon the route became impassable. We left the car in a clearing and pushed on into a tract of dense thorn bush broken by several water holes. These water holes are either partially dried up streams or shallow pans in the nature of dew ponds.

I had read a considerable amount about the habits of the buffalo, and Simon conveyed to me by sign and gesture that the animals would come and drink at these holes. Inspection revealed numerous deeply sunk slot marks in the mud. They had been made that morning.

The habits of buffalo are almost the same all over Africa, whether they live in swamps or bush. They must have water, consequently their movements are determined to some extent by the rains. Like other big game they always feed at night on the open plains or in the clearings. At the first approach of dawn they retire deep into the bush, choosing as thickly sheltered a spot as possible to lie down in during the heat of the day. Shortly before sunset they move slowly down to their feeding grounds and drinking places, grazing at random as they go. They roam these plains all night and drink again just before dawn, prior to drawing back into cover during the day. In hilly or mountainous country they select the high ground. I was astonished later at the gradients they could climb.

In districts where they are little disturbed by man—now comparatively few—the beasts some-

times remain in the open plains for as long as an hour, or even more, after sunrise, but where they have learnt the fear and hatred of human beings, they usually go to cover before light breaks. In order to stand the best chance of success, it is imperative, therefore, to be up before sunrise, to enable one to see them in the open before they get into the bush.

Simon had selected a waterhole with spoor plainly visible. Next morning we approached cautiously, and poking our way through the bushes, peered out across the clearing, dimly illuminated by the half light of the fast increasing dawn.

I found it difficult to suppress a gasp of delighted astonishment. There, some fifty yards away, was a small herd of about a dozen buffalo. I sat thrilled now, immensely more so than when I had seen any lion in the whole of Africa. Great grey black bodies, supported on short, stocky legs, with enormously thick, powerful necks and heads, carrying sweeping massive horns. They were bunched together grazing gently away on the dew-laden grass of the clearing. Perched on their backs were a few tick birds searching for their breakfast amongst the bugs which infest these animals.

Owing to their acute sense of smell, one inevitably comes on the buffalo tail on, through the necessity of keeping down wind. I sat there looking at my first herd wondering if I would get a shot. Would one or any of them look round? Minutes dragged away. The herd went on browsing, and the light got brighter.

Then my heart leapt with excitement. The bull on the extreme right of the herd stopped and looked round in our direction. It seemed to me as if he had seen us. I knew he was not a good specimen, his horns were poor, but still he was a

buffalo. I took careful aim between his eyes. I was still resolute in sticking to the rules of the game, never to shoot unless there was a chance of a clean kill.

He dropped as if poleaxed, and the rest of the herd snorted in unison as if scenting danger at the identical instant. They wheeled and faced us, giving me a chance to get another small bull. Then the herd thundered off into the bush.

The sight is memorable. One hears a dull thumping of hooves, significant of their vast bulk, ending in a sudden concerted crash as they charge into the bush in a solid phalanx. If you can imagine an omnibus being driven full tilt through a wooden hut you have some idea of the terrific impact as, heads down, tails well up in the air, these massive brutes throw their humped up greyish black bodies madly at the undergrowth, and leave behind only a cloud of heavy brownish dust.

Leaving one boy behind to inform the camp of our success and to get help to bring in the meat, Simon and I went off to try and follow the herd up, and so commenced what I consider to be one of the finest sports in the world, hunting buffalo in thick bush or bamboo. The animals have the keenest sense of smell, hearing and sight, they move with uncanny quietness, and when standing still on the alert are absolutely silent.

To get anywhere near them you have to be a first-class spoorer, and be able to move quickly and silently, remembering always the direction of the wind.

Simon soon found where these particular animals had entered the game trail, a narrow path between bushes winding here and there in no seeming direction. There was little, if any, wind. One experienced in following buffalo is able to judge

very accurately how far they are ahead. Then, of course, I was a novice ; but Simon knew the game all right.

Half a mile further on we could see where the herd had halted. Another mile or so, and we found the spoor was quite warm, evidence that we were very near on their tails. We crawled forward like cats, sometimes lying prone to peer under the bush.

Then I saw Simon freeze into a chocolate statue. I followed his gaze half left. Something was moving on the other side of the bush, a bare fifteen yards away. It was a buffalo's tail—the only moving thing on a motionless monster standing so still that the light and shade of the bush had camouflaged him.

The herd was so completely covered by the bush that it was impossible to see any vital spot, although with practice my eye came to discern the dim outlines of the dull slate-grey bodies.

Simon saw more than I. He pointed out to me a pair of horns appearing through the bush. Crash went the .275. The great body fell, again that terrific snorting and thrashing of bushes as the rest went smashing through the undergrowth like a fleet of traction engines out of control.

Success had made Simon and myself fast friends. Success stands higher than anything else with a native. Once you have his confidence, particularly in hunting, he will follow you anywhere. No day seems too long for him. Grinning from ear to ear Simon suggested following the remaining buffalo. So off we went again through the thick bush. Soon I had completely lost all sense of direction. Although we were rarely off spoor that wound up and down countless hills, we never caught up with the herd.

With that magical and unerring sense of direction which is the prerogative of the African native, Simon brought me back to camp. Without him I would have been irretrievably lost.

The next morning we were out again by dawn, but rather later than the previous morning. The first waterhole proved a blank, nor was there any fresh spoor, but further on we found tracks of buffalo disappearing into the bush across an open glade. We immediately entered the trail, and after winding our way some distance, rounded a corner of the undergrowth, and suddenly came across the tail end of a small herd moving away from us.

Simon advised letting them get out of sight. We waited accordingly and then set off for another half-mile or so, advancing with infinite caution. This kind of stalking is an incredibly joyous thrill.

When we finally did come upon them again, they had broken from their file and were standing about. Owing to the blackness of the bush I could see only two, so I dropped on my haunches and sat down to await a chance of a good shot.

I got it and dropped a powerful bull.

It was then I learnt that you can never anticipate accurately what a buffalo will do.

First there was a wild, sweeping rush to one side, followed by a gigantic smashing of bushes to the right, and then the whole herd wheeled sharply and came straight for us. I have an impression still of some ten animals charging head down, bunched together like a phalanx. What happened next I cannot remember. I fired at the one which was coming directly on me, and then threw myself flat on the ground as the great beasts came thundering on top of me.

I seemed to have been stifled to a semi-conscious stupor. The light was blotted out, my face and

eyes were full of dust. I came to normal consciousness to realise with an incredulous and rapidly increasing joy that the herd had missed me by a seeming miracle.

For a moment I lay where I had fallen stretching my legs and arms to see if they still worked. Sitting up and looking around I could see nothing of Simon. Only a fast disappearing dust cloud swirling angrily away in the distance marked the progress of the herd.

Had Simon been trampled under the Juggernaut rush of these frantic monsters?

Fully two minutes later he appeared grinning as usual. He had adroitly rushed aside and made himself scarce and safe. He was immensely relieved that I had come through uninjured.

Since then I have thought deeply on this incident. I do not believe this was in any way a deliberate charge. I don't think the herd even saw us. It was merely a stampede bred out of panic. Quite naturally with these heavy animals a stampede can be just as dangerous as a charge, if you happen to be in the way. If I had not killed the animal coming straight at me, things might have ended differently.

That night, seated by my camp fire with its flames lighting up the boles of the thorn bushes and casting eerie flickering shadows against the opaqueness of the bush, I began to browse meditatively over the past few days. I was hunting and having a cracker-jack time; and it was costing me next to nothing. That at least was a cheering discovery.

I had brought a kind of iron ration with me in case of emergency, and had supplemented this with flour, sugar, tea, baking powder, salt, jam, butter and potatoes.



Simon and Wildebeest



Native hut

Portuguese East



Lioness



Road through Bush

Portuguese East



*An old lone bull
Note depth of boss:
43-inch spread*



A fine young bull

The Bush provided the rest. The natives bake bread by means of an ingeniously contrived oven. First they scrape a hole in the ground like a rabbit stop, light a fire in it, and immediately the earth is sufficiently heated the fire is pulled out and the bread is put in. After closing up the hole with earth, another fire is lighted on the top.

Bread cooked this way is delicious. You certainly do appreciate dinner by your camp fire after a long day's hunting. One eats to the accompaniment of the singing of frogs and crickets. The frogs make a kind of bubbling kraa-kraa sound, and the crickets chirp with irritating regularity.

Overhead the stars stand out like brilliants in the clear atmosphere. Close by, the dusky forms of the boys glimmer in the light of their own fire as they sit round in a circle, crooning tunes, playing improvised instruments, and chattering. At intervals the silence becomes intense. The air is perfectly still. The flickering flames make little oases of light in the dense blackness of the bush, and one feels how puny and unimportant one really is when face to face with nature. There is a beauty and romance in it all.

Next morning, instead of going down to the waterhole, Simon suggested following along a small river course, now almost dry. After some time we came on the spoor of a single buffalo where he had been drinking by a waterhole. From the large size of his slot, I gathered that surely here was something worth hunting. Simon's sudden animation showed that too, so following the direction of his finger, we crept into the bush, hot on the trail.

The ground was very dry and we lost the spoor several times, but in each case, by casting around, one of us was always lucky to refind it. Eventually after winding and climbing ever higher and higher

into the hills, with the bush becoming thicker and thicker, we came on spoor quite warm. We crept along the trail, both of us intensely excited, until on rounding a bend, Simon suddenly dropped flat on the ground, and turning round to me grinned widely.

I crawled up to him. A very large buffalo stood in the clearing, turned slightly away from us. His head was partially hidden, but I could see the great sweep of his horns as the dawn light shone on his grey-black body. He certainly did not present a good shot, and thinking that he might move off into the bush, I risked a shoulder shot. As the rifle crashed, he fell on his knees with a great roar, then rose up on to his feet, and bent sharply down on to his knees again. . . . There followed a mad rush away from me, snorting and roaring, seemingly completely out of control. I fired a second shot. At that he crashed headlong into the bushes and rolled over bellowing and kicking. A third shot into the brain finished him. He proved to be a fine lone bull, with a spread of forty-three inches, a deep boss, and a huge body.

The boss of a buffalo is the hard mass of horn stretching across the forehead. It is actually the base of the horns and becomes much enlarged and hardened with age.

That night I realised I couldn't stay hunting buffalo in Portuguese East for ever. I would have liked to, but inwardly I was getting restless about moving on . . .

There was a danger both from rains and the Portuguese. I really don't know which worried me the more—but I had already learnt just how bad an African road can be when it rains.

I knew I had to get to Tanganyika before November to be safe from the rains, and I knew that news

travels incredibly quickly even in the African bush. How it does is a mystery Africa never reveals.

After one more day's hunting I made a dash for it. Simon accompanied me close up to the frontier, and safely led me across under cover of the blackest night. Poor old Simon. He badly wanted to come with me, but it seemed unwise to take him away from his own people into strange lands. So we bade farewell and I pushed on, extraordinarily happy at having missed the Portuguese, lollopping merrily over incredibly bad roads.

Not even having to dig the car out twice on the way back to Johannesburg could check my good spirits. I was off on the trail again, ready for the worst road Africa could produce. It did its best to please me, and as if tiring suddenly of this form of persecution threw in an amazing stretch of good murren road. The car leapt ahead with the enthusiasm of a greyhound spotting a released hare.

I myself, too, caught the car's mood, and was effervescing with good spirits as I cruised over the Beit Bridge. The bridge is a memorial to that great friend of the late Cecil Rhodes, Sir Alfred Beit, and carries the railway and the road. At low water the Limpopo does not appear very big, but at high water is a mighty river, probably a thousand yards wide.

A hundred yards further on I struck the Customs barrier of Southern Rhodesia, having completed the record run of my trip—351 miles in 10½ hours, which seems to be a fine show for a van in Africa.

CHAPTER VIII

A Piece of England

IN some peculiar way I sensed the friendly atmosphere of Rhodesia when viewing my first vista of it from the bridge.

A red-hatted native boy in a neat khaki tunic smiled a welcome as he raised the barrier across the road. I pulled up outside a neat Customs house, as clean as a choir-boy's collar on Easter Sunday morning.

I was pondering why on earth there should be Customs between the various sections which go to make up the British Empire in Africa, and not between Devon and Cornwall, when a nice looking young fellow, obviously English, came out.

"Hello!" he said cordially. "Where are you from?"

"Joburg," I replied.

He looked surprised.

"My hat! a long run—you've done well."

It was difficult to realise this polite and friendly youngster represented the Customs, but I remembered his official function with an effort. I had rifles and other dutiable stuff in the car, which also had to be "officially" admitted.

I showed them to the young official, but he said in the most friendly way possible:

"Oh, never mind about them now—come across and have a drink. I'll put a boy in charge of your car and fix everything up for you. I expect you're

pretty tired," he said, as he looked at my dust-covered face.

We went across to the hotel and spent the evening together. He was a typical example of the friendliness that is extended to the visitor from one end of Rhodesia to the other. I saw not a vestige of red-tape that abounds in some districts. Everyone did everything to oblige.

Next morning I went on to Bulawayo, feeling I was an Englishman travelling in a thoroughly English country. To me that's a great feeling.

Bulawayo, set in a great plain, has wide cheerful streets, edged with bungalow-type white-fronted houses. It has an unique War Memorial that must provide a perpetual link with "home," as the Rhodesians fondly term England. It is built in the style of a quadrangle of an Oxford college. The names of the fallen are inscribed on panels.

I learnt a lot about Southern Rhodesia as I pushed up through this tremendously friendly piece of "England." Its chief trouble is the surplus number of cattle. White settlers alone own about one hundred thousand surplus cattle, whilst the total owned by natives is put at one and a half millions. There is a movement to get a quota of Rhodesian chilled meat for the English market, and it is to be hoped that success will result, for in no country in the Empire will be found harder working, kinder, more hospitable and patriotic settlers than in Rhodesia. At present the standard of chilled meat from here is said to compare not quite favourably with that from the Argentine, but this of course could be rectified.

Everywhere I stopped in Rhodesia I encountered the same spirit of warm friendliness that had greeted me on the frontier. Every one was cheerful. Maybe the fact that income tax was a shilling in the pound,

and that incomes up to six hundred pounds per year were exempt, accounted for that in no small measure.

A man I met told me that he could work ten to fifteen boys for a cost of two hundred and fifty pounds a year.

Unless a woman is actually interested in farming or some specific profession, she would find the country confoundedly dull. The isolation from her own sex is consequent on the distance. Papers come late, and there is a danger of succumbing to the boredom which often assails young women in lonely regions, but there is something so exceptionally attractive about the country that I almost made up my mind to settle there.

An example of the amazingly low cost of labour came to me when I went out with a settler to look over his estate. He was making a dam across a water-course, to form a reservoir covering a square mile of country. The dam was a hundred and fifty yards long, twenty-eight feet high and fifty feet wide. A hundred natives were working under the direction of a white overseer. Each native, working on piece work, had to dig out four cubic yards of earth a day and bring it up to the dam, where other boys rammed it on to the surface of the dam. For these four cubic yards they received eightpence.

The settler was making the reservoir to lay on water to the house and to drive a turbine for an electric light plant. The overflow would irrigate his garden and the crops he was growing in the valley below his house.

The cost of the whole thing, including piping and plant, he told me, would be well under one thousand pounds. I doubt if you could get the same thing done in England for five times that amount.

The part of Rhodesia I traversed was essentially a bush country. I went on along a narrow track, winding through undulating country, burnt to an almost copper-coloured brown, arid and dusty. Even the grass growing in the middle of the track was brown. Occasionally I passed clearings in which grew enormous fig trees. In some cases the circumference of their branches covered at least half an acre. Their green foliage provided a welcome note of colour variation. There were also many of those ugly, but unique, baobab trees, whose scanty branches look so unfinished and decayed, surmounting enormous boles.

The grass growing in the middle of the track was sometimes as high as my radiator top. Towards Lupani the land became more undulating and open, and the route correspondingly worse. The red leaves of the trees which had begun to take the place of the bush reminded me of autumn in Scotland.

Passing through the sandy Dett Valley, across the Shangani River, I noticed dense clouds of black, flame-flecked smoke rising from the bush. Soon I was driving across wide belts of country where the surface had been burnt to an even state of charcoal-like blackness.

The heat was becoming almost unbearable, and the car was now skidding on a loose sandy surface. It seemed to be appreciating this as a variation from the former mud.

Just outside Dett the road led me for twenty or thirty miles through dense smoke, given off by the crackling, spluttering bushes. I burst into the local inn grimy, parched, and almost choked with smoke, and soon learnt that this devastation was not due to any accidental fire.

The Dett Valley is in the tsetse fly area and

great strips of country have been burned to try and stop the spread of this worst insect of Africa.

There are many theories as to the best way to deal with this grave menace, but it is now well known that the fly thrives in bush country, and also that it does not like crossing open spaces by means of its own wings. It is, however, very partial to settling on moving objects, such as cars or animals, and so is able to spread itself about the country.

Steps have been taken in many parts of Africa to try and isolate it by burning great strips of bush and obliterating all the game within these areas. Opinion seems divided as to the advisability of the latter measure, although it is claimed that it has met with success in Natal.

That night I was drawn, only too willingly, into a gloriously cheery bar party.

It began with two or three bronzed and jovial Rhodesian farmers, a railway man who looked like Mr. Punch, and a public works official, who remains in my memory because of his exceptionally close-cropped hair and his thin, squeaking voice. Then later a commercial traveller, breezing prosperity and whiskey from the previous sundown, attached himself by grabbing the dice-box.

One does not stand treat in a Rhodesian bar. You shake for it with poker-dice. With a run of luck you may not pay for a drink for a week.

Over this jolly company presided the shirt-sleeved proprietor ministering the drinks, ever ready to toss a dice with the customers. I shall always remember that atmosphere of clamorous, care-free jollity. Impossible to feel a stranger long, with these hearty chaps, yarning and joking.

To this mixed grill of good company there came a German from Tanganyika. He was a pleasant

fellow, and hearing I was an Englishman, singled me out and told me that he had fought against us during the war. On that we shook hands again, and he introduced me to a burly policeman who had fought against him—on our side.

I listened to them discussing the East African campaign, until my attention was diverted from the purely personal reminiscences to a large, fat Dutchman with a voice in proportion to his bulk, who had pushed his way up to the bar.

Having got his drink, Gargantua began to harangue the proprietor on the political iniquities of the Nationalist Government. He was a strong South African Party man. Unlike most of his race, he was strongly opposed to the then existing Hertzog party. He certainly could talk, and he was at pains to make his voice heard above the rest of the conversation.

Further down the shiny length of the glass-topped bar three crop-headed settlers in open shirts were rattling dice for drinks.

Presently I was greeted by a newcomer—a tough-looking customer, whose costume attracted my attention almost as much as his bronzed, hard-bitten face, which smiled at me over a dusty twill shirt almost devoid of sleeves. A leather belt, twill shorts, bare legs as hairy as a bear's, a suggestion of socks and a pair of stout boots completed his rig-out.

He had about him a reckless, debonair air that I liked, but underneath it all was a suggestion of extreme toughness. We shook for drinks, and he told me about himself. He was a professional white hunter, and had been employed by the Rhodesian Government to kill all possible game in the Gwai Valley, to stop the spread of the tsetse fly, which might travel across the burnt clearings.

on the backs of animals. We had a drink or two together, during which time, no doubt, each was summing up the other. I told him I was shooting.

"D'you know anything about shooting?" he asked, looking at me keenly from under his sandy lids.

"Not much in Africa, but I have a fair experience in other countries," I said.

He went on: "Can you use a rifle?"

I affirmed that I knew which end of the barrel the bullet emerged from. At that he became confidential.

"You know, a lot of you guys think hunting dangerous game is child's play. Let me tell you it is quite the reverse. How would you like to be out in the bush with buffaloes milling around you, like a thousand blankety fiends?"

I told him it was what I'd come for. He looked at me a bit blankly, as if I might be pulling his leg, and then following the Rhodesian custom, we had just one more drink. Later we had one more; and then another, still talking hunting.

Suddenly he said to me: "I think you are just the chap and I think we'll get on well together. How about coming with me to my camp to-morrow, and shooting for a week or so? You will be a great help. God knows I need it!"

We had another drink on that, and arranged to go off together in the morning. Over dinner, around a simple table, and waited on by the hostess of the inn, we discussed details, while the rest of the bar party argued politics, joked and told stories.

That very cheery evening finished at three next morning, without a dull moment. My new friend proved that whatever else he might be, he was a good hunter. Long before dawn, still wearing his togs—I'll swear he had slept in them—he yanked



*"Scanty branches so unfinished
and decayed" surmounting
enormous boles*

A Baobub tree

*Giant Fig tree
with branches
covering $\frac{1}{4}$ acre*



*Hereford cattle on ranch
belonging to Mr. Mitchell,
lately Premier of
S. Rhodesia*

*Cattle dip,
S. Rhodesia*



*A rough
portion of
Great North
Road*



*Better
going--
Great North
Road*



*S. Walsh,
white
hunter
with
landlord,
Dett Hotel*



me out of the bed into which I seemed to have only just crawled, and we went over in the car to his camp at Gwai. It consisted of a few huts made of grass, thatched round poles. He had thirty boys, and shortly after lunch we went off on trek, the boys carrying numerous packages of food, blankets and clothes on their heads.

I liked the white hunter. He improved on acquaintance. I would buy him a drink anywhere.

He was a good sportsman. Like all good hunters, he hated the idea of having to murder innocent and non-dangerous wild animals, but he had his work to do. It is quite a different proposition as compared with ordinary hunting, where one goes after a particular animal. Now it became a question of killing as many animals as quickly as possible, irrespective of what means were used to get them.

It seemed a terrible shame that the advancement of civilisation should demand the destruction of so many harmless and often beautiful beasts. It was, however, a hard week of long days walking under a hot sun, in a country full of tsetse, and we both got badly bitten; and of nights camped around a fire, with the air full of mosquitoes. Rolled up in blankets, we slept on the ground until dawn, and went on with the trek next morning.

Our bag was naturally a very big one, but the whole undertaking was most distasteful to both of us. On the fourth day, to my great joy, we came on buffalo spoor, and for the rest of the time hunted these exclusively.

During this trek I discovered you can only really understand Africa and the natives by going on foot, trekking onwards day by day, packing up camp at dawn, and re-pitching again somewhere.

else at dusk, through ever-changing country, miles away from anyone, alone with nature. Thus, I began to study the animal world, and to learn some of the wonders and secrets of the African bush. This intensely instructive and interesting week passed like a flash. I was sorry indeed when the time came to re-pack the van and set off again northward towards Victoria Falls.

CHAPTER IX

Northern Rhodesia

I STOPPED for refreshment at Wankie, a cluster of weather-stained tin hutments, incredibly dwarfed by a semi-circle of conical slag heaps, and found I was on one of the deepest and richest coal seams in the world.

Owing to the depressed state of the copper trade, the mines were producing only about ten per cent. of their usual output ; an example of how one trade depends on another. The streets, however, gave no signs of unemployment. When there is no work the natives immediately go back to their reserve.

The road from Wankie onwards was a mere sand track, in places narrower than the wheels of the car. Sometimes it shot suddenly up precipitous mountain sides, a minute later to dip perversely into unexpected depths. Luckily, by this time, I had become something of a change gear expert.

Deep wedge-shaped watercourses running down the mountain side carved out ruts in the track varying in depth according to the amount of water pouring down in the rainy season. The first took me completely by surprise. The car's nose went down suddenly, like a rowing boat into the trough of an Atlantic breaker. I jabbed my foot on the brake, as the rear wheels began to slither and rumble. In an instant we had plunged below the surface of the track. The jerk of the front

tyres striking the ridge at the bottom nearly threw me through the windscreen. Instinctively I jabbed my foot down on the accelerator. The car seemed to buckle, as if the chassis were bending and then, after giving a pained roar, and aided I am sure by one of those blessed miracles that seemed to attend my adventures in this van, it began to climb the stony slope like an eager horse, and soon brought me breathless to the summit. Riding can give this pastime nothing by way of exercise.

Fifty shattering miles later a particularly atrocious, rock carbuncled length of road brought my long-suffering car to a stop. I had got out to see if any damage had been done when my attention was arrested by a low but sonorous rumbling that came swelling from the distant bush. Could it be a mass formation of aeroplanes or a great dynamo at work in some hidden clearing of this sun-scorched wilderness? At once I remembered that I was heading towards Victoria Falls. And then ahead of me I saw an enormous white pillar of cloud standing straight up out of the bush. The blueness of the sky behind it gave it the appearance of a solid column of glistening snow.

Nothing, I think, could describe this mighty phenomenon more picturesquely than the native word, Mosi-oa-Tunya, "the smoke which thunders."

I pressed on eagerly, experiencing at least a shade of the feverish thrill that must have grown in the breast of Livingstone when he first heard this unforgettable roar and glimpsed this stalwart sentinel of nature, that ever watches over these mighty falls.

Later I came upon the most memorable sight in my life—the Victoria Falls!

*" Above the Falls
the Zambesi flows
serenely "*



*" And then without a
moment's warning "*

The Main Fall

Victoria Falls



Looking through the chasm

Rain forest on left



*Another view of chasm
Note the rainbow
Rain forest on the right*

Victoria Falls



*Looking into the inferno from
half-way down the rock*



*Approaching the
"Boiling Pot"*

The Victoria Falls Hotel, owned by the Rhodesian Railways, some two miles below the Falls, is incidentally the best hotel in Africa. From my room I could hear the immense moaning roar of the water, and looking out towards the railway bridge spanning the steep gorge, at the bottom of which flows the Zambesi, I could see that fascinating cloud rising out of the bush, now a pleasing green in colour. Outside I found the heat moist and tropical.

I wasted no time, and set off by car to get my first close-up view of the falls from the eastern cataract.

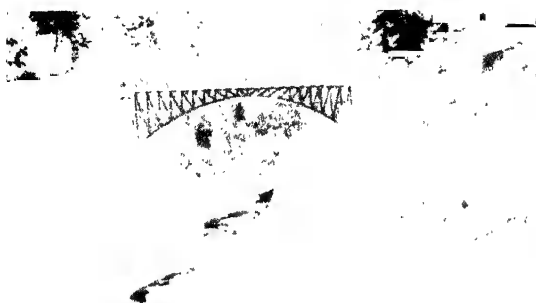
It seems impossible that any pen could adequately describe this amazing phenomenon of nature—once seen, the sight can never be forgotten. Above the falls, the Zambesi River flows quietly and serenely in a densely wooded valley, giving no impression that anything unusual is to happen. The water is one and a quarter miles wide, and dotted by islands covered with tropical verdure, the home of many hippos. Then suddenly, without a moment's warning, the entire width of this one and a quarter miles of water plunges precipitously four hundred and twenty feet over sheer rock in four main cataracts, into the most raging turmoil that can be ever imagined. The fissure into which this water falls is not many hundred yards across, but at the eastern end of it a gorge, not more than two hundred feet in width, has been carved to a depth of five hundred feet sheer, and through this extremely narrow space the millions of tons of water of the Zambesi are forced, having fallen four hundred and twenty feet.

Rushing through this gorge, in a southerly direction, the course turns abruptly due west.

in a sharp bend, to form what is known as the Boiling Pot, a terrifying, whirling mass of water in which nothing can live, and the depths of which until now have defied all attempts of man to plumb. In a recent effort to determine this problem, three railway lines were let down by wire hawsers into the stream by means of a winch. They were carried out by the force of the current, similar to a float on a fishing line, and when they were pulled up the metals were found to be twisted round like corkscrews. The Boiling Pot of the Zambesi guards its secret jealously.

From here the course flows in a zig-zag fashion for several miles. It has carved a gigantic, though narrow, chasm through the fissures of the rock, and some way below a wonderful bridge, thrown from one side of the rock to the other, spans the river. As one peers over this bridge the river, some five or six hundred feet below, looks incredibly small. It is only by climbing down to the water's edge that one has a true perspective of the terrible force. The bridge carries the road and the railway line to the north—a triumph of British engineering—for not only is it a magnificent work, but it was constructed ahead of contract time and without the loss of a single life.

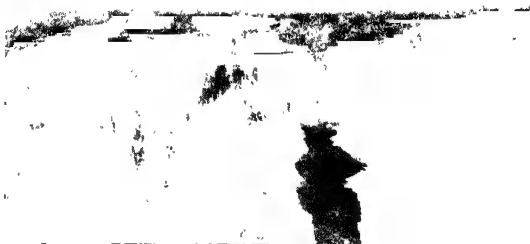
As the water plunges over the lip, down into the inferno below, it creates enormous volumes of spray that rise as high as one thousand feet. On the side of the chasm opposite to the lip, this spray falls like heavy rain, and so forms what is called the Rain Forest. Here, growing in bewildering size and profusion, leaning at all sorts of angles, are huge tropical plants and trees, heavily covered by gigantic creepers, as they strive one with the other for the mastery of life in this wonderful



*A triumph
of British
engineering*

*Great
Zambesi
Bridge*

*The narrow gorge
500 feet deep, $\frac{1}{2}$
mile below the
Falls*



*The unplumbable
"Boiling Pot"*

*The Zambesi, $1\frac{1}{2}$
miles wide, hav-
ing fallen 420 feet
is being forced
round this nar-
row corner at the
bottom of the
gorge*



soil kept continuously watered by artificial rain.

If the sun is out, when you look over the edge you will see beautiful rainbows in the chasm. Later, if the moon is in the correct position, the lunar rainbow is even more beautiful. At night the roar of the falls sounds like the surf of an angry sea in a terrific storm, whilst the spray, lit up by the moon, appears above the forest like great clouds of nebulous smoke. From the eastern side, and just above the falls, within fifty yards of the lip over which the water hurls itself, it is possible to canoe across the river to Livingstone Island, which separates the Devil's Cataract from the main Cataract, and it is possible from here to lean over the edge and peer into the turmoil below. The spray, the terrific noise, the rainbows, the dark, ominous rocks with the white raging torrent of water dashing over, are magnificent. It is all wonderful and marvellous, but it is very terrifying. I don't think I have ever been so frightened in my life.

It is thought that the sands of the Kalahari desert at one time occupied the position of these Falls, and covered a heap of basalt lava. In the Stone Age the climate became humid and the Zambesi began to cut a course across the former desert. Since then this gorge has been gradually eroded in the basalts, and the zig-zags are due to the lines of strong fissures crossing the course. But whatever the cause may be, the fact remains that over the lip of this basalt the Zambesi plunges to form the most amazing waterfall in the world, a sight and spectacle ever to be remembered.

I struck the Northern Rhodesian Frontier shortly after crossing the Zambesi Bridge. A barrier across the road, with a smart askari in attendance and a police hut alongside, are the only visible

signs that one is required to stop. Here, as in Southern Rhodesia, the young police officer was polite and civil. Our conversation soon turned on to shooting. The actual Customs and Immigration Offices were in Livingstone, seven miles to the north, but a note from the police officer made everything plain sailing. There was no delay or red tape on arrival at the town. Every one seemed pleased to see me and was keen to render every possible assistance.

Livingstone is a small town consisting of about twelve hundred whites, but covers a considerable area. At the moment it is the capital and seat of government of the colony. Government House, not a very imposing building in which to shelter His Majesty's representative, is also here. Shortly, however, the whole of the administrative branch is to be moved to Lusaka, which is several hundred miles to the north, and a large sum has been voted to build a new Government House and offices there. I spent the evening with His Excellency Sir James Maxwell, who had given his life in the services of his country, and it was with much sorrow that shortly afterwards I learnt of his death during his voyage home at the termination of his labour. His work for Rhodesia will probably be more appreciated now that he has gone, than while he was in office, for he was determined at all costs to try and keep down official expenditure to the lowest limit—a policy which could be copied, with much benefit to the community, by other Governments, not only in Africa.

Unlike Southern Rhodesia, the Northern Colony is governed from London. True, she elects members from her settlers on to the Legislative Council, but the general ruling of the country comes under the Colonial Office. Southern Rhodesia has her

own government, elects her own premier and cabinet ministers, and administers the country herself. In time to come it seems probable, and certainly advantageous, that these colonies, which have not yet the management of affairs in their own hands, will obtain it. Given the chance, there are plenty of men living on the spot perfectly capable of forming their own ministry. It seems incongruous that men from England, who know nothing whatever about Africa, should be given posts there in front of the settler. These men do not wish to settle eventually in Africa, and at the termination of their term of service, retire and generally return to England. It would be fairer to the colony to have its ministers and officials elected from its own settlers, who have made the country, and whose homes and interests lie there.

Ninety-four miles to the north, along a winding sandy track running close along the railway line and through thick scrub bush, lies the tiny settlement of Kalomo. I spent a few days here at the Anchor Ranch, belonging to Ronald MacFarlane, late of the 9th Lancers. He and Mrs. MacFarlane came out several years ago, took up large tracts of land, and carefully fenced them in, using the whole as a cattle ranch.

Cattle-ranching in Rhodesia is no sinecure. If one thing isn't wrong, another is, and the fortitude of the settlers, perpetually struggling with light hearts against almost unsurmountable odds, is beyond all praise. In addition to all the diseases which affect cattle in this country, bush fires occur daily in the dry season, particularly during July, August and September, and vast tracts of land are burnt up. The cattle ranchers try to minimise the risk by burning belts round their farms

to prevent the flames spreading, and so localising the damage.

It is surprising how the British race takes its customs, habits and pastimes into the far distant places. Here in this pretty little ranch bungalow, in the centre of a bush-surrounded plain in the midst of Africa, everything reminded me of home. A low ceilinged room, a settee and a few chairs, typically English sporting prints on the wall, a table in the corner with the *Tatler* and *The Field* laid out, no doubt two months old, the *Bulawayo Chronicle* of three days ago, and a bygone *Racing Up-to-Date*. Pipes, cigarettes and knick-knacks were scattered on the mantelpiece, whilst in the centre, in splendid isolation was a well-polished hunting-horn.

The talk is all of home, of people one knows and of sport, clubs and politics. My host and hostess were almost born on horses. Often during our conversation I noticed a wistful eye looking at a print on the wall of a pack of hounds in full cry, and I could picture the longing in their hearts to be hunting at home again, well up with the leaders—as I know they both would be—in the field of the Quorn or Whaddon.

Each evening the table was laid in the small, simple dining room, exactly as at home. Plate nicely cleaned, crested spoons and forks, and the meal typically English served by well-trained boys. I slept in the guests' rondavel, a circular concrete hut, thatched with grass. The inside was spotless, despite the attentions of white ants and myriads of other insects which infest Africa. An English bed and English linen, a chest of drawers, dressing table, a pretty bedspread and, as a finishing touch, a large vase of flowers. I awoke each morning in this remote spot of the world feeling completely

at home—in fact almost thinking it was England, until, on looking out of the veranda, I was confronted with the wide open spaces, the bush and the natives. It would seem that British people are British no matter where they live. They take their customs and habits and manners with them, and they follow the ideals and traditions in which they have been brought up, and so remain the leaders, and also the envy, of the rest of the world.

But the call to move on soon came, and with regret on leaving this hospitable Rhodesian home, I went northward ; but not far this time.

Sixty miles further on the track quite suddenly burst from bush, and I got my first glimpse of Choma, surely the cleanest and most appetising settlement that ever flourished in the sun-drenched wilderness. Driving through it, I never once lost my first impression of order, sunlight, cleanliness and beauty.

On the boat coming over I had made friends with a charming couple, Harold and Maisie Duxbury. They had laughingly invited me to call on them, and they were exceedingly surprised when I drew up outside their home, some eight miles from the settlement.

“Mochipapa,” is a low, brick-built bungalow, girdled on three sides by a veranda. I was astonished to learn that these two young people had alighted on the bush two years before, and had merrily set to work to clear it. Harold had built “Mochipapa ” himself, and I had the honour to be the first guest to stay in it.

Sipping tea with my blue-eyed, sunny-tempered young host and his wife on the veranda, it seemed almost impossible to realise that he had actually cleared two hundred acres of this stubborn bush country, and laid out not only a charming garden,

but had planted an avenue of trees, completed a six-hole golf course, and laid down a well-graded road over five miles in length. At first sight Harold gives one the impression of being either tired or lazy, maybe because he preserves a habitually calm demeanour.

I spent an extraordinarily happy month at "Mochipapa," time enough to get to know almost every inhabitant in the district. By taking part in their pleasures and occupations, and rubbing shoulders in a most friendly and unconventional way, I obtained a wonderful insight into the lives of the happy, energetic people.

Harold had a young white estate manager, whom he and everyone else called "Wattie." Wattie might have been five feet in height, or less. He had that light hair and very blue eyes rather common in Rhodesia. I was told that once he had been known to have drunk one glass of sherry, and to have said he thought he had had half a glass too much. In that, I should say he was a type rarely met with in Rhodesia! He did not smoke. The story goes that he once lit the wrong end of a cork-tipped cigarette! I never saw him wear a hat, not under the fiercest sun, and this, despite the most severe lectures that Maisie would administer to him. Wattie did everything; brick-making, building, rigging up wind-mills, engineering, plumbing, painting, decorating, curtain-making and heaven knows what else. Every kind of farming seemed to be child's play to him. He could drive a team of oxen as well as any native, and he knew something about gardening, and motor cars and carpentering. He even mended his own clothes better than any tailor. An unique young man!

I well remember my first morning at "Mochi-

papa." Wattie had put the bath in a new guest's bathroom. I was to have the honour of christening it. Malinga, the excellent Nyassa house boy, told me my bath was ready. I got in and enjoyed myself. But when I pulled the plug out, the water came pouring from underneath, and flooded the spotless cement floor. With difficulty I replaced the plug, but too late to prevent a considerable mess. Later on I mentioned the fact to my hostess, thinking it might be a peculiarity amongst Rhodesian bathrooms. She was quite undisturbed. The invaluable Wattie had merely forgotten to fix the union between the bath and the waste-pipe.

Tea at eleven o'clock is an important hour in a Rhodesian's life. The boys commence work at six a.m., to the beat of a gong. Between this time and eleven a.m. much work has been done. Tea on the veranda is a ritual. Harold generally produced his brainwaves over the teacups. He would suddenly come to life, and say: "Wattie, I think we'll make a tennis court." Next morning it would be a garage, the next some huts. Wattie, the man of many accomplishments, would merely nod, and immediately tea was over would get to work on the new idea. Boys would arrive from nowhere, and the whole place would become a hive of dusky industry. I strolled round, amazed that so many things could be done at once. A tennis court and a garage, and several rondavels were under construction, the garden was being planted and new paths laid down. Some boys were putting the finishing touches to a windmill, others were merrily digging irrigation trenches. Everybody seemed to be whistling or singing and smiling, a result of good organisation.

One morning, during the tea ritual, Harold

awoke from one of his reveries as suddenly as if someone had drenched him with a bucket of cold water. He said: "Maisie, we'll make a swimming bath." So the bath was immediately planned. It was to be a great bath of brick and cement, and Maisie insisted on it having flowers growing round the top. A little more breathless thought and they decided one of its banks was to be a rock garden. Then the path up to it had to be bordered by flowering shrubs. By a masterly stroke of organising inspiration the overflow was to irrigate the potato patch. Wattie listened to the plans and nodded in agreement, as he gazed silently out across the clearing in front of the house, pimpled with enormous ant-heaps. He was probably visualising this wonderful bath. Actually, I discovered he was counting the ant-heaps. Their soil makes excellent bricks.

In Rhodesia, if you want anything you make it.

Immediately after tea a trek of boys armed with picks, shovels, wheelbarrows, fell on the ant-heaps. The earth was mixed with water and put into moulds. Finally, the bricks were burnt in an improvised kiln. Everything went like clockwork. Even Maisie took her share. Wattie was in his element. He spent hours of figuring, measuring, taking levels and pegging. The bath was to be sunk about two feet into the ground, and then built up six feet. There was to be a deep and shallow end, a diving board, and all the etceteras which go to make a swimming bath. The excavation was finished in an incredibly short time, levelled, and the first bricks laid. All of us mixed mortar for days. Then we laid bricks, used plumb lines, levels and square edges, while all the time new bricks were being turned out by the thousand from the kiln. Notwithstanding this, work on

all the other amusements, such as the tennis courts, duly progressed.

The news of the building of this great swimming bath soon spread. Natives from the bush came in and watched the "mad" bosses. They gathered round, making a whistling noise, like children at a pantomime. It was probably funnier to them than any pantomime.

The height of the bath rose as quickly as a council house. Eventually it satisfied Harold. Pride began to glow in the eyes of the inscrutable Wattie. The time for cementing arrived. Wattie disappeared into Choma with a lorry, and we drank tea. A few hours later he came back with dozens of bags full of cement. For the next few days everyone available cemented as if their very lives depended on it. Everything got cemented, even our hair, ears, clothes and shoes. The natives, their curly heads whitened with the stuff, seemed to love the job. Maisie would appear at intervals, bringing us tea. Sometimes the teapot and cups, carelessly put down, became embedded in the cement. The tea tasted strongly of ammonia from the cement, but we worked on doggedly.

For the amateur, cementing is heart-breaking as well as back-breaking work. Cracks began to appear in the cement, so we simply put more on. And then it was finished. After the earth had been banked up round the outside, the great work was ready to be filled. Wattie undertook this! A pipe was connected from the windmill to the bath. Wattie produced a stump of pencil and a piece of paper and did some great calculations. Finally, he said he knew how much water the windmill did or should throw in a day. He had worked out the cubic contents of the bath, and he also claimed to know how many gallons were

in a cubic foot. We said we doubted if he did, but that did not deter him. He was happy with the joy of achievement—we were all happy.

The water was turned into the bath, and so for days and days it rose higher, but not so high as our spirits. Five days later the water reached the top. Our spirits were at the fever point of excited triumph. I cannot imagine any creators being more excited than we were over our works.

At tea that very morning, Harold's brain started to work again.

"We'll have a party to open this jolly old bath—and it'll be some party too."

That was of course Maisie's particular pigeon. She needed no second invitation, and immediately skedaddled off to Choma in a flurry of excitement, to arrange for cakes and various kinds of eatables designed to grace the occasion. I realised the extent of her shopping when later, suspicious-looking flat wooden cases began to arrive. They were drinks—an essential part of Rhodesian hospitality.

Wattie went backwards and forwards to his precious bath like a terrier to a bone. After a few more calculations he discovered he could squeeze a little more water into it.

Harold sent natives with invitations to every white resident for miles around.

By the time the opening day had arrived, an elaborate programme of amusement had been planned to the minutest detail. Apart from the swimming bath, the guests were to be entertained with golf, tennis, quoits, and innumerable buffets.

We made our final inspection of "Margate-in-the-Bush" before settling down to eleven o'clock tea. It looked splendid. We drank with happy hearts. In our eyes were visions of our friends



Anchor Ranch

*"In Rhodesia, if you want
anything you make it"*

Mending a broken cart



*"Tea on the veranda is a
ritual"*

*Harold and Maisie Duxbury
and Watlie*



*The start of the
Swimming Bath*



*Weight
lifting
and
balancing
feats*

*Native
women
with
bricks
each
weighing
7 lbs.*



A 77-lb. load



*A mixed bag
near Choma*

*Fiander and
author*

from the distant bush splashing themselves merrily in the sunkissed waters. We thought of their faces lit up with anticipation as they came bumping through the bush country in their inevitable Fords. A swimming party was an unheard of novelty. I shared with Maisie and Harold the hospitable thrill of being able to give these British at the back of the beyond just a taste of what the gang at home enjoy as a part of their daily round.

Maisie began to visualise Mrs. So-and-So and Old What's-his-Name in the water. As we lacked a mayor to do the opening ceremony, Maisie had decided to initiate the grand gala by plunging in herself. Her smart blue bathing costume, that had last seen use in a more civilised area, was all ready.

Even Wattie began to show signs of schoolboy excitement.

The tooting of a motor horn outside warned us that the first of our guests had arrived. It was 11.5.

Maisie and Harold went out to meet the first arrival with their proudest "come-right-in" and "just-look-at-it" expression on their faces. I remained contemplating this wonderful work of our hands. At 11.6 there was a loud crack, as if someone had flicked a gigantic zjambok across the bath.

Wattie appeared from nowhere like an alarmed antelope. Another crack, followed by a terrific rush of water, a loud rumble like a falling house, and one wall of the bath had collapsed.

The overflow that we had designed to irrigate the garden more than did its work.

I have the vision now of poor Wattie as he darted forward and stopped with the water gurgling round his shins. Then he produced his

notebook and began one of his endless calculations. Perhaps he hoped to emulate King Canute, for he signalled to the boys, who rushed into the water like a pack of excited beagles. Paddling wildly around in the flood, they gurgled and shrieked and whistled till the scene represented an aquatic pandemonium. They could never have anticipated that the white bosses had built this great bath for such a lovely game.

Maisie surveyed the debacle with a wry smile, and tilting her hat on the back of her head as a sign of bemused resignation, began to laugh. Harold, trying deliberately to look casual, lit a cigarette. Wattie scratched his head over a conundrum in his calculations.

I felt genuinely distressed. Maisie solved our individual problems with a flash of that indomitable spirit one finds in the right type of woman. "Let's have some more tea," she said. We all went to the veranda, except Wattie. He joined us later, but only to say: "I found out what's wrong. We'll rebuild it."

Within an hour he had got his horde of boys at work, and was whistling gaily as if nothing had happened. Was he not floundering knee deep in a quagmire that represented our dearest hopes, and certainly his greatest feat of engineering?

I could not stay to see the bath completed.

Before I left Choma I took part in a cricket match. From Livingstone to Lusaka the keenest interest is taken in the game, and a league has actually been started between the settlements. For keenness and skill the Rhodesians cannot be far behind their brethren at home, who bat on silky, shaven wickets and retrieve their boundaries on cool fresh sweet-smelling grass. Our pitch was a clearing in the bush scrub, levelled to as great

a degree of efficiency as human ingenuity and native labour allow; our wicket a strip of coconut matting, fast, but tricky, and able to stand up to the fiercest sun.

To realise how much such events mean to settlers in Northern Rhodesia one must appreciate the enormous size of this colony. It is 800 miles long and 400 miles wide. In this vast area, six times as big as England, living in tiny and widely dispersed settlements are roughly 10,000 whites: less than the population of a small country market town at home. There are comparatively few tracks and these are impassable in wet weather. When there is a cricket match, dance or other amusement I can assure you Rhodesians know how to enjoy themselves.

Our visiting team had come a hundred miles. Play began at 9.30, and stumps were drawn just before sundown. Two bright-faced girls in smart white frocks acted as scorers. Women, I noticed, seemed to take even more interest in the game than men.

After play the visitors were put up in the local hotel, and there was a sundown party and dance, which combined to provide one of those cheery evenings which make one's memory of Rhodesia so happy.

CHAPTER X

Kafue River

SYDNEY FIANDER, Maisie Duxbury's father, was landlord of the hotel at Choma. One of the early pioneers of Rhodesia, I found him a man of kindly feeling and possessed of great charm and personality.

We spent many enjoyable days together, shooting under ideal conditions.

There are places round Choma where guinea-fowl are to be found in hundreds. They are difficult shooting because they always appear to prefer to run rather than fly. It is best to have a few natives to drive them. Locally, partridges and pheasants are classified together. They are mostly of the Francolin tribe, and are very much alike. They are not unlike the red-legged partridge. The commonest met with are the Swempi partridge, Humbolt's Francolin, the Cape redwing and the tree pheasant.

Our best bag comprised thirty-eight guinea-fowl, twelve partridges of various descriptions, three reedbuck, one oribi and one duiker. Once, coming home from shooting guinea-fowl, we espied a small herd of sable antelope, and after a short stalk bagged a right and left of two good bulls.

Meat is never wasted in this country. The natives who work on the farms live on practically nothing but "Pocha," which is mealie meal boiled up and made into a sticky mess, something like porridge, which they eat with

their fingers. Two pounds of this per day is their sole food, and as they rarely see meat it is a great delicacy to them. We had no difficulty in getting rid of the meat from our two sable.

In some districts in Africa special rations of meat are given to working boys, the theory being that it results in better work. To us it may seem strange that they can labour ten or eleven hours a day entirely on mealie meal, but it must be remembered that natives do not work as consistently as white men. They concentrate for an hour or so, stop and take a laugh for a while and then carry on again. They rarely remain long in one situation, every year or two returning to their wives in the reserve. Here they do no work at all. The lot of the native woman is very different from that of her white sister under western civilisation.

About a hundred miles from Choma lies the valley of one of the biggest tributaries of the Zambesi, the Kafue River. At the small settlement of Kafue itself the river runs through high, bush-covered hills. Further up it penetrates a vast and completely flat plain. Here in dry weather the stream is roughly three hundred yards across, but when the rains come, it overflows its banks and swamps an area some fourteen miles across. When the rains cease the plains are covered with luxurious grass, as green as a Devonshire meadow, interspersed here and there with tropical growth—beautiful green-topped chilala trees, brooding giant figs, very much like our own oaks in shape, and the strong spiked euphorbia. Innumerable waterpans are the homes of countless ducks and geese, as well as being watering places for big game. This great expanse, known as the Kafue Flats, is one of the best shooting places in Africa.

On the plains at dawn, or again in the evening, one sees animals in a variety of colours—the vividly striped zebra, the dusty blonde eland, the large shaggy bearded kudu, with its thick corkscrew horns, and the white-collared waterbuck, who has a distinctive white ring running round his tail.

In the wet season, when the migration from the north commences, duck and geese arrive in thousands. Guinea-fowl, partridges and light-brown sandgrouse are also very common. Lions are by no means absent, and in few places in Africa can be found more buffalo.

Fiander and I left Choma one morning in the van before dawn, and made our way along the bush track to Mapanza, where there is a settlement of the United Mission of Africa, subscribed for by the English Universities. The country is all native reserve. The Missioner, Mr. Ruck, took us round. Sixty natives were being trained to become teachers, to instruct their less educated brothers in the smaller depots throughout the native reserve. The fine brick church and its adjoining buildings have been constructed entirely by natives working under Mr. Ruck and his colleagues. Members of five distinct native tribes which live in the reserve attend the school to learn the rudiments of the three R's, scripture, geography and physical training.

Here again Africa confirmed my belief that you never know what is round the corner. After my eyes had become accustomed to endless miles and miles of the African bush with its great and wonderful variety of game, and its bleak, almost savage loneliness, I walked bang into a schoolroom, with forms, desk and blackboard, identical with any in an English village; the only difference being that the pupils were curly-headed, solemn-

eyed little niggers listening to a painstaking native dominie teaching in pidgin English.

It would seem that the native can be taught almost anything by way of education, but you cannot alter his habits.

For instance, by no yet known means can you infuse into his head any ideas on the value of ventilation. The youngsters leave the well lighted, ventilated schoolroom at the end of the day's studies and run happily to the circular wattle and mud huts that are their homes. Everything is round in Africa. At dusk the head of the family barricades the flimsy door. Beyond this the hut has no ventilation, there being no windows to admit light or air. A huge fire is lit in the centre of the floor and the family, more often than not ten in number, ranging from seven days to seventy years of age, sleep huddled together wrapped tightly in blankets. With their heads covered up and each trying subconsciously to get as near as possible to the fire, they sleep as if drugged. It is a common occurrence for the smaller children to be burnt to death by rolling or being pushed into the fire. Many adult natives carry horrible scars through life as the result of sleeping too near these fires; but they continue to do the same thing every night, proving Africa's exception to the rule that a burnt child fears the fire.

The fug inside one of the native rondavels when the family is asleep is indescribable. Bad air, smoke, unwashed oily bodies, mealie beer, decaying food and other decomposing matter combine to make one wonder how any of the occupants could survive until morning, and indeed how even a fire could burn in such an odoriferous suffocation.

Unrelenting efforts are made at Mapanza to

teach the natives the value of fresh air. The missionaries put windows and chimneys in the rondavels. The natives watched these labours, grinning amiably. Immediately the work was finished they set to work with a will to block up these strange openings and keep out the light and air.

The Mapanza River is famous for its barbel fishing, and what is even more strange is the fact that it is strictly preserved, not by any game commission, but by the natives themselves. Each of the many pools on the river belongs to different native families. The rights have been handed down to them through the centuries, long before white men ever set foot on the dark continent.

During the rains these fish come up the Zambesi and Kafue in their thousands and enter the Mapanza River. When the water recedes, in the dry season, they are left in the pools in almost unbelievable numbers. The natives catch them in a peculiar way. Each fisherman makes a bundle of sticks bound together like a bavin, just large enough for him to be able to sit on. Then, armed with a toothed spear, he launches the bavin on the water and jabs down into the mud to impale the fish. Thousands are caught in this way. Whilst the men are spearing, the women go to each end of the pool and catch any fish that try to escape, in nets.

Although the fishing belongs to different families and is rigidly preserved, all the members of the tribe are allowed to fish, but only by permission of, and on the day selected by the owner of the pool. How the sign or order is given is one of the many mysteries of native life, but the result of the order is an amazing sight. Hundreds of men carrying bavins and spears rush madly to the

pool, hurl themselves on to their primitive rafts, some so eagerly, that they fall in the seething waters, and start jabbing frenziedly in the mud for fish. They are packed so closely together as to be almost knee to knee in the water. This mass angling, accompanied by the weirdest shouts and echoing volleys of laughter that reminded me of a flock of mythical demons holding a party, goes on until sundown.

The women, who incidentally do nothing but work and bear innumerable children, collect the fish and hang them up to dry. The broiling sun soon does its work, and in the process produces a stink that can be comparable to the odour of a thousand Billingsgates in full stench. The air around is permeated so thickly that breathing is difficult, and the contemplation of food out of the question. That may be why none of the carrion birds of Africa ever come near the fruits of these anglers' labours.

I count this barbel fishing as one of the most strange and quaint sights of this great continent.

Leaving Mapanza, we travelled on a sandy track through perfectly flat country to the beginning of the great Kafue Flats, then parched and intensely hot. In the rainy season they are one vast mosquito-infested swamp.

The remaining waterpans sheltered duck, mostly pink-billed teal, and South African pochard. As we approached to get a closer view of the knob-nosed geese in the middle, hundreds of butterflies of every imaginable colour rose from the edges like a floating garland of flowers. I saw several species identical with those to be found in England, particularly the "Orange Tip" and the "Painted Lady."

In this district I came upon one of the many

mysteries of antiquity that seem to present themselves at almost every turn of the head in this fascinating country.

Among the natives are to be found the Mashukulumbe or Baila tribe. It is a matter of pure conjecture whether there is any truth in the legend of the "lost tribe of Israel," and many books have been written on the subject, but these people differ in appearance and habits from the natives in any other part of Africa. In profile, especially, they have a distinctly Semitic look, with large hooked noses, long sloping foreheads and thick upper lips. Many of them are deformed, and elephantiasis seems to be rampant among the males. Their dark brown skins are in most cases heavily pockmarked, and on all sides there are signs of a race rapidly becoming degenerate.

Approaching the Kafue, we crossed an enormous open plain as flat as any fen in Lincolnshire, but incomparably bigger. Save where the verdure encircling the waterpans appeared like emerald fairy rings, the plain presented an enormous sweep of yellowish grass, punctuated by the tall chilala trees, the bunches of palms on their tops giving them from the distance the appearance of feather dusting brooms stuck upright in the ground.

Over dinner with Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Reid, the District Commissioner and his wife, I learnt that the Kafue Valley is famous for buffalo. Immediately I found my interest quickening even more than before.

Bouncing along those endless miles in my trusty car, my random thoughts had in the main part been devoted to the hunting of these fierce beasts. To my mind the only sport worth a damn is that which contains an element of risk, and a flavour of the unexpected.



Baila women



Mapanza church



Baila village

*Note "impala"
horns on top of
huts*



Waterbuck

My lonely drive over the five thousand miles I had covered since leaving the Cape had been sport, as it was constantly flavoured with the unexpected and contained its mild element of danger. It was dwarfed entirely by the contemplation of going out after these ponderous creatures, themselves fierce and unrelenting hunters and possessed of indomitable courage. Every time I thought of it I was moved more strongly.

I wanted to finish dinner and start immediately. Fiander generously fell in with my wishes, and the next day we set off down the river in a punt, closely followed by another loaded with our camp kit and stores.

Our first stop was at Bunga Drift. As we floated down the river, the local chief and a number of his tribe appeared through the thick masses of bamboos on the banks and welcomed us by clapping their hands in rhythmic unison. The chief in his blue shirt was easily noticeable towering head and shoulders above the rest of his people.

It was impossible not to return the sunny smiles of the native women as they sat bare-breasted on the mud flats, clapping their hands with all the enthusiasm and gusto of our own flappers applauding their favourite crew at Henley. Here, though, were no house-boats, no Phyllis Court, but a brown river a good two hundred yards wide, slowly flowing between heavily overgrown banks.

Our welcome continued. The chief introduced himself by signs, and ordered his men to assist in unloading our gear. His attitude was one of inquiring respect. One sensed that he had an eye to business, mingled with a vast amount of pride of position, that would ensure our receiving the best of attention.

We made camp in a clearing in the midst of

the Saka bush, which is some of the thickest growth in Africa. Great thorn bushes, close together and entwined with masses of interminable tropical creepers, form a veritable jungle totally impenetrable, except by following along the narrow game trails.

Inspection showed that this was indeed a great game country, well up to my expectations. We soon found a great deal of spoor, including buffalo, kudu, impala and waterbuck.

At that time of year (August), the dry season, the buffalo split into small herds. Cows and calves, with a few young bulls, hang together, whilst the elder bulls form small parties of their own. When the rains arrive these small parties amalgamate into larger herds numbering up to a hundred, and often more.

We decided to leave camp shortly after four p.m. to attempt to cross the trail of buffalo leaving the Saka bush on the way down to the water. We took three of the Chief's recommended "boys," and Fiander's own hunting boy called "Benny." Benny was one of the best hunting boys I ever met, intelligent to a degree, keen, with eyes like a hawk, active, brave, and a magnificent spoorer.

Working along the open glades, in between dense bush, sometimes along narrow game trails through the jungle, sometimes past small pans of water in clearings, we passed a regular phantasmagoria of buffalo spoor. But there was nothing distinct; no regular spoor of a small party having just crossed. We saw several magnificent kudu bulls, and once a fine, gimlet-horned eland, a large, brown fellow, the biggest of all African antelope.

Compared with the red deer of Scotland, the majority of antelope are not elegant. They are

heavy shouldered and fail in their hindquarters. The red-brown, gentle featured impala are an exception. They are the Pavlova of the bush. To see a herd of these dainty animals suddenly leap into flight is an unforgettable sight. They progress in swift, leaping arcs, jumping with graceful elegance like large grasshoppers, so swiftly and so unexpectedly that they appear to be shot into the air on suddenly released springs. I am told that they can cover nine feet in height and about twenty feet or more in length.

But our hunting minds were keyed up to fever pitch for the bigger stuff—"nyati," the mad devil of the beasts, swift as lightning, and ever full of fight. We had come to a small pan, and were all casting about for a definite spoor, when Benny dropped on his knees. On these occasions one's temptation is to shout, but by this time I was steeled against such foolishness.

Benny's discovery was good news: the marks of a small herd having come out of the jungle, clearly indented in the soil. They had wandered round the pan a little, and gone back into the bush on the other side, heading towards the river. Thrilled, like so many bloodhounds we took up the fresh spoor. The animals could not be more than five minutes ahead of us at the most.

We went on quite silently for about twenty minutes, creeping sometimes on all fours through the long grass, along a winding trail heavily overhung with bush.

Suddenly there was a burst of thundering hoofs, followed by a terrific crashing of bush. It was as if the whole herd were throwing themselves through the undergrowth. We stopped short, trying to read the solution of it all in each other's faces. The boys were showing signs of scare.

Their limbs were tense, as if poised for instant flight. They seemed to be sniffing the air like game dogs.

That crashing was buffalo. Had they heard us, or winded us? Both seemed absolutely out of the question, for the sound seemed to be coming from a good hundred and fifty yards off, and the wind was definitely in our favour. The battering noise did not seem to move, but continued at the same spot. If the herd were stampeding in any direction, it would fade or grow louder.

We were all literally on our toes. Benny went forward, peering his way through the creeper-bound bush. Fiander and I followed, rifles ready. At each step wondering what we should see, we went thus for a hundred yards towards this incessant crashing, now getting louder.

Then Benny stopped short. His poised arm was quivering. We had come to the edge of a small clearing that seemed to be literally packed with great heavy-shouldered grey-black buffalo. They stood grouped in the middle, and running round them thrashing the bush with their heels, twisting, turning and charging at each other, were two bulls.

At first I thought they were fighting. I believe now that they were merely sparring. We watched this amazing drama of the jungle with fast beating hearts. The two bulls would thunder round the herd with the speed of racehorses and the agility of greyhounds. Then one of them would whip back with a dexterity unbelievable for such a weight of flesh and muscle, to crash horn to horn with his rival. Locked together, their tails lashing the air, their hooves churning up the dust, each threw his massive strength into the struggle for mastery. The matching was equal. First one gave

ground ; and then the other, blaring in mock rage, bore him back, snorting with the exertion of the struggle.

Seemingly stimulated by the conflict, the rest of the herd began to twist and turn, lashing out indiscriminately, scuffling in an ever thickening and stifling dust cloud. Then they began galloping round each other in a solid circle, only to stop, to snort and sniff, their tails lashing the air like furious flails.

Sweating with the heat and excitement, we sat on our haunches watching this bizarre rodeo in the Saka bush. The animals never stood still. Again and again the bulls charged each other. Their big bodies met, repeatedly producing a sound like short rolls of dulled thunder. One of the fighters was a fine specimen, fierce of face and with a huge boss.

For an instant, staggered and almost breathless by a battering crash from his fellow, he halted between us and the scuffling herd, standing sideways. Fiander's rifle spoke. Bang !

The milling herd stopped short for an instant, and following that second of complete silence, the air was shattered with a concerted snort of astonishment and alarm—one of the most penetrating noises I have ever heard. Then, as one body, great heads couched low beneath their shoulders, tails high in the air, they cannonaded into the bush amidst a cloud of dust, smashing down those seemingly impenetrable thorn bushes as easily as a motor lorry through a fence.

All except the big bull ! His right shoulder seemed to have given way. He got down on his knees, bellowing and snorting, and then fell suddenly. Fiander's first bullet had taken him clean through the heart, a very fine shot. He was

a magnificent animal, one of which any hunter might be proud.

News travels like magic in these vast African expanses.

The buffalo hardly seemed dead when hordes of natives appeared from nowhere. Not only the men of the village, but their wives and children as well, armed with every describable shape of knife, alighted on the great beast like a swarm of locusts, and began to cut it up. They came quite uninvited.

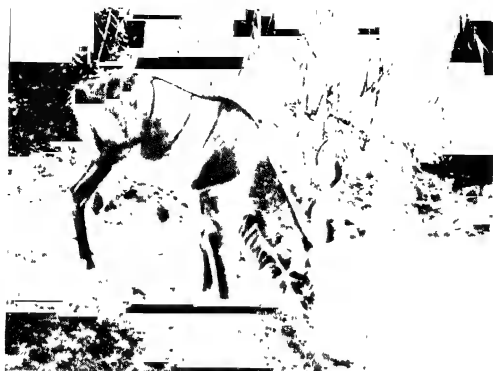
I was surprised at the enormous loads the women carry on their heads. The haunch and hind leg of a buffalo is a very heavy thing; I could hardly move it. It took three men to lift it on to one woman's head, but balancing it like that she went off on her journey of at least two miles into the village, singing all the while.

While some natives clambered over the carcase, hacking out their pieces of meat, others danced joyously round in their peculiar shuffling way, letting out shrieks and grunts of delight. It was like a gigantic Sunday-school party, where someone is perpetually exposing fresh delights to the youngsters. I saw one young native with a spear leaping over the animal and stabbing it viciously. Probably he imagined he was re-enacting the deeds of his ancestors, who are reputed to have hunted "nyati" with spears.

Although this country is literally alive with game, these particular natives did not seem to kill for meat. Maybe the Kafue provides for their needs with "stinking" fish, but they were only too enraptured to take the buffalo or any other meat, if it was got for them.

Our kill had set the whole village agog with excitement, which manifested itself in crooning

Kudoo



*Native women each carrying
1½ cwt Buffalo meat*



Fiander and Buffalo

*Rough going
for the van*



*Fiander
and Bennie*

Bennie crossing

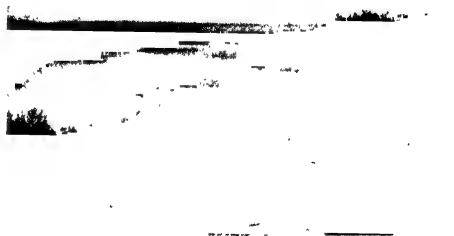


*Native women's
welcome—
Bunga Drift*



*Great crested Crane,
Chilala and Fig tree*

*Typical duck swamp
near the Kafue*



and dancing to the beating of drums. We were tired, so after eating the excellent meal that Benny conjured up as if by magic, we turned in and tried to sleep.

"Tried" is a good word. The mosquitoes were inquisitive and hungry. I doubt if anyone ever really sleeps in the bush. There are so many noises, one's senses are so much on the alert. Crickets sing incessantly, and from the river comes the everlasting croaking of the frogs. Night birds give vent to weird, alarming cries, and then the ever latent thought of whether one will hear a lion or a leopard is there. And so it was this night. Several times I heard the King of the Beasts roar, away up in the distant bush, and once the bark of a leopard, very like that of a small dog, and could it be all imagination that the splosh-splosh of great animals, no doubt buffalo, was plainly audible as they splashed round the mud pans? Thus is the hunter's night, apart from the busy mosquitoes.

Fiander and I had some splendid sport in this paradise of big game and wild fowl.

CHAPTER XI

Chambesi River

BUT again I had to experience that regretful emotion of parting with a good friend. Determined not to forget that I was motoring through Africa, I bade Fiander good-bye.

One bright morning found me heading for Broken Hill, some 270 miles north. The journey took me two days over an atrocious road which revived the pain in the chafed patch on the small of my back that was everlastingly bumping against the back of the seat.

Broken Hill is an attractive township which depends almost entirely on mining lead, zinc and vanadium. Knowing that I was faced with an unbroken journey of at least twelve hundred miles of no-man's land after Kapiri M'poshi, which lies forty-seven miles from Broken Hill, I purchased as much petrol as I could possibly carry at the very reasonable price of 3s. 6d. a gallon. I had been warned that higher up it would double its price.

At Kapiri M'poshi the road leaves the Rhodesian railways system as it runs into the Belgian Congo. One is virtually on the edge of the beyond, faced with twelve hundred miles of loneliness. The next railway system is met at Dadoma, in Tanganyika, twelve hundred miles to the north-east. Between this spot the only means of transport is a road impassable in wet weather.

To me this section of my journey was undoubtedly the most beautiful and varied.

The heat was sweltering. I drove in a shirt and trousers, with no socks. Weeks ago I had given up the latter as unnecessary. My right arm, supported on the edge of the door, had become severely burnt by the sun. It had peeled so many times that I began to wonder if there was any skin left to burn again.

After Kapiri the country seemingly runs wild. The road lies between densely bushed mountains, their craggy tops giving evidence of their volcanic origin. At Chewefwe I stopped to admire a small settlement surrounded by orange groves, ideally situated underneath the mountains, and irrigated by clear running streams.

Owing to the extreme heat, I found it increasingly difficult to keep awake after lunch, so I made a habit of starting out at dawn each morning, and driving as fast as I could with the enthusiasm that each new morning brought to the ambitious traveller. M'pika, 114 miles farther ahead over the usual bush country, provided another of those "round the corner surprises" that make this huge continent so alluring.

I was eating my usual lunch of oranges by the roadside and rather casually looking across a square mile or so of clearing bitten out of the bush, when suddenly a huge three-engined aeroplane dropped out of the blue into the middle of it. I immediately felt like a schoolboy, and wanted to rush forward and shout hip-hip-hooray.

This winged link with home had made contact with me here in the depths of the African wilds, hundreds and hundreds of miles from any communication. I had left the railway with the almost frightening prospect of not striking it again until Dadoma, and instead I had found the swifter air-line bringing me directly in touch with London.

I was thrilled—but not tempted—to think that I could pick up a machine here, and be in London in a matter of eight days.

The machine was one of the fleet belonging to Imperial Airways. Two of these air-liners land at M'pika twice a week, one going north to London, and the other south to Capetown. The regularity of their call is phenomenal. The few residents of the area use "Imperial" as a kind of date clock.

My schoolboy curiosity was more than gratified as I stood on the edge of that distant landing ground watching the passengers alight. They might have been stepping out of a train at home. Women in smart, well-cut travelling costumes, men in flannels and, to me now, unaccustomed trilby hats, seemed incongruous in these distant open spaces. One man was carrying a deed case and an umbrella. He looked for all the world as if he were going to his chambers in the Temple.

Watching these folk seemingly completely unconcerned by the marvel of travel in which they were participating, surely with no particular thrill on their part, I fell to surmising how great and important a part the aeroplane must play in the future development of Africa.

Then I pushed on, feeling very much a humble motorist, faced with a long journey, still never knowing what was round the corner.

My back was becoming severely chafed through bumping up against the back of the seat. I tried binding it up. If you have ever tried bandaging yourself at home you will sympathise with me. It was even more unsatisfactory attempting it in the open, under a sun which began to broil any piece of skin exposed to it. The bandage lasted for quite an hour under the chafing of the next

portion of road, which kept throwing me up and down like a pancake. I had the satisfaction, however, of knowing the seat would catch me after each bump.

Seventy-four miles from M'pika, after crossing miles of wide vleis, the bandage having perversely ridden well up my back to a most useless spot, I came upon the Chambesi River.

Thus I had completed another stage by reaching a tributary of the great Congo flowing to the west, instead of to the east. The Chambesi is a majestic stream, rather like an English river in the colour of its water, and running between steep banks, heavily flanked with bush and bamboo. It is about 150 yards wide at the point where I struck it, and can be crossed by pontoon, worked by the natives.

The safari urge came on me suddenly. It was increased perhaps by finding a woolly-headed native boy who could speak English in quite a passable degree of fluency. Sam—as he introduced himself proudly—could do, and did do, everything. We had only known each other a few hours when we were pushing off down the river in two punts, with enough stores for a week's safari, and a dozen boys as oarmen.

African rivers were proving irresistible to me. I had a jolly fine week's sport, marred perhaps by the perpetual mosquitoes and the extreme heat. I had mosquito nets with me, but there was always at least one intrepid lone winged hunter who found his way to the happy hunting ground.

The Chambesi is well stocked with fish such as bream, barbel and the tiger fish, a big, strong-jawed fellow who puts up a magnificent fight when taken on a spinner. It is essential to use a gimp trace. In the evenings the banks were thick with

duck. I caught a glimpse of that very shy beast the sititunga, or water kudoo.

What interested me more than anything was the discovery of a swampy clearing with the ground literally covered with buffalo spoor.

I looked at Sam, and said one word : " Nyati ? "

He grinned back, immensely pleased because he saw I was pleased, which is typical of the good hunting boy.

I found myself thrilling afresh at the proximity of these animals. This time though, I was going to be an observer rather than a hunter. This spot—their nightly drinking place—would suit me well. I had always wished to see buffalo drink at night. I also wanted to experiment to determine how far off they could scent a human up-wind. This was a golden opportunity to find out. I got Sam to build me a small platform in a tree, sending a boy back to camp for a blanket and something to eat, and made arrangements to sit up in this hide all night. The moon was full. I took a rifle up into the platform with me, with no intention of shooting. I merely wanted to experiment.

I had chosen a tree that was down-wind in relation to the spoor of the buffalo as they approached the pans.

At sunset I was safely ensconced in the platform. The boys departed for camp, leaving me in my favourite situation, alone in the wilds with African nature. The crickets and frogs commenced their incessant nightly singing and croaking ; darkness swamped the scenery, and the stars came out with the brightness which is so striking in Africa. Jackals called ; hyenas howled, but strangely enough I heard no lions. The moon had just cast its almost ghostlike beams across the engloomed countryside and silvered the face of the water on

the pans, when suddenly a stick snapped away in the bush. My sense of hearing was keyed up to a striking degree of intensity; I listened with subdued breath, and then quite faintly came a deliberate slosh of heavy feet. At each step the noise became louder and louder, until I was quite sure there could be no mistake. A herd of buffalo was approaching. Slosh-slosh; the noise increased convincingly as they sogged their way through the sodden ground. Soon I heard the low snuffling of their breathing as they cleared their noses. Incredible sensation! The veritable chance of a lifetime! Waiting for a lion over a kill had been exciting. This was a thousand times more so; a sensation immeasurably precious to that hunting instinct so strong in my very bones.

I was wondering anxiously if they would come right up to the pan without detecting me.

They came, after what seemed an interminable wait, long enough for the same impudent mosquito to bite me in the leg without fear of reprisals. The moon suddenly revealed them, their thick, wet bodies black in the shadows gleaming silver-grey in that pale effulgence.

They advanced in a phalanx, for all the world like a herd of domestic cattle, their flanks pressed close together. I could hear the almost sibilant swish of their tails. They seemed to be mumbling nasally to each other as they came to the pan within ten yards of my tree.

The leader, a cow, had a half-grown calf at her heels. I noticed this cow most particularly, because she had lost half of one of her horns. The rest of the herd, some fifty in number, was composed of cows, calves and young bulls. There was not really a good head or boss amongst them, confirming the view I already held that the old bulls

keep to themselves. The first old cow and her calf walked straight into the pan, followed by the rest of the herd. Soon they began to drink, belly deep in water. Now and then two young bulls would lock their horns together with much splashing as they playfully fought with each other, and the young calves began to gambol about in the water like so many children at the sea-side. This drinking party went on for about half-an-hour, by which time the animals had become somewhat spread out.

All at once, as if she had received an intimation—could she have smelt me?—the old cow nosed her calf, and both of them splashed out of the pan, and loitered slowly away across the vleis, feeding as they went. The rest went after them slowly but certainly, for opening out into a long line of browsing shapes, gradually they went farther and farther away until lost to sight. I could hear them long after that. During the whole time they had no notion of my presence. I had learnt much from this wonderful experience.

Previously I had often thought a cow led a herd. Now I was more certain of it than ever after what I had seen, for the same cow was in leadership the whole time.

I did exactly the same thing the following night. I sat in the same tree with the same wind conditions, and at about the same time, the same herd came to the water pan led by the same cow.

They remained there as before, drinking, wallowing and splashing about for half-an-hour before finally opening out and wandering off, grazing as they went, on to the open vleis. There could be no doubt that a cow led this particular herd, and I strongly suspect that a cow is the leader of every herd of mixed sexes, for on the several occasions on which herds have stampeded towards me, I had

always observed that the leader and most dangerous animal was a cow.

Next night I tried a new experiment, using a tree up-wind of the trail that the buffalo would take as they left the bush on their way to the pan.

Shortly after dark I heard the first sound as the animals passed through the outer edges of the bush; then followed a silence broken by several staccato snorts and punctuated by much stamping of feet. It was the alarm-signal, well-known to all buffalo hunters. These keen-scented animals had smelt danger, but they were not quite certain what it was. I could hear them cautiously moving forward towards me again, and although I could not see her, I could picture the old cow in front, with her nose in the air, as she suspiciously sniffed the night air.

I could just catch the faint outline of the mass pressing forward; all at once they stopped again. A few sharp snorts and stamping of feet, and then silence supreme. I could imagine so well what was happening. The entire herd was packed together, flank to flank, standing perfectly rigid; necks outstretched, heads well back and noses pushed forward, ears cocked out, keenly alert, their short, stocky forelegs well apart and knees braced back. For many minutes not one of them gave the slightest sound.

No animal can excel the buffalo in the art of standing motionless when its suspicions are aroused.

I remained tense to a degree of agony until, without the slightest warning, the silence was sheared off by a burst of wild snorting and the dull slogging of mighty hooves galloping through the mud. The herd had wheeled and were tearing in mad fright towards the bush. The sound of much

smashing of undergrowth rose like the swelling of a storm as they continued their headlong stampede away from the invisible danger. I laughed to myself. I could visualise that, to me, impenetrable bush being smashed down as if by a steam-roller. Charging buffaloes do not heed obstacles. Everything is taken as it comes and is flattened out before their onslaught.

Many duck and teal dropped into the pan during the night. They would swim and bill about in soft mud in the shallows, and then fly off to other feeding grounds.

Several nightjars circled round my tree with their awkward bat-like flight. The males were very conspicuous. At this time of the year—the breeding season—one of the primary feathers grows to a length exceeding two feet and hangs down vertically like a streamer.

Constantly overhead my attention was attracted to the wingbeats of large quantities of wild fowl. Any lover of nature can appreciate the intense interest of such a night. Also I had found out something which was to be useful, for it was going to prove how far off buffalo can scent a human being—when the latter is up-wind.

At the first streak of dawn I stretched my weary limbs, tumbled out of the tree, and walked over to where I had heard the buffalo during the night. The whole story was graphically written in the mud. Here was the place where they had finally stood, and the spot from where they had eventually stampeded. The great slot marks sunk deeply in the mud showed where they had remained silently for so long.

I easily picked up the trail over by the bush, and followed it. They had emerged one after the other, out of the cover into the open, where they

had bunched together as they continued their advance over the swampy ground.

The marks firmly indented in the mud showed where they had sensed their first whiff of danger. The spoor showed the next cautious advance until the final halt. With pleasurable excitement I measured the distances from my tree. The first alarm point was three hundred and one yards from the tree. The final stampede took place at a distance of one hundred and eighty-nine yards.

There had been practically no wind during the night, which further proved to me what a wonderful sense of smell a buffalo possesses.

I re-climbed into my tree, and scanned the expanse of the flats through my glasses. The sun was just coming over the horizon. Herds of impala, zebra, antelope, and many buck were feeding, moving ever closer and closer towards the bush, into which they would shortly withdraw to lie up during the heat of the day. Soon my boys arrived, whistling as they came. They looked at me with blank amazement. I think they really decided I was becoming a mental case. I have no idea what they thought of my experiments, but they seemed none too pleased when they presented themselves this morning. The reason dawned on me, as slowly as a joke on a professor. For three days running I had been presumably hunting and had shot no meat for them. By this time, knowing the psychology of their minds, I took two of the most disconsolate with me and entered the game trail in the bush. We found some buffalo spoor after an hour's searching. Two miles later we came upon a small herd, and I was able to kill a beast, which the boys eagerly cut up to carry back in triumph to our camp close to the river bank.

For the next two days we worked our way back

by boat to the Chambesi pontoon. The natives handle their rough boats very well indeed, and although the journey was slow, it was never uninteresting. I saw many kinds of duck, innumerable evil-looking crocodiles. By working a spinner behind the boat I got some excellent fishing. I can well recommend this trip. Sport is excellent, the cost very little; boats are easily obtained, as well as boys to row them, and very few provisions are required. I only spent ten days here, not really enough time. Six weeks would allow a wonderful safari, going a long way up or down the river and stopping to hunt at random.

When I got back to the pontoon I paid off the boys—they still looked at me as if they thought I was crazy—ran the car on the big punt, and set off again on the other side of the river, heading towards Kasana, on the way to Abercorn.

Large blades of grass rising eight feet in height, lined the track. Soon the bush country began to disappear, and its place was taken by wild areas of dead grass interspersed with green-topped thorn trees. An occasional running stream added to the pleasure of this welcome change. It only wanted a road to let me think I was driving through the New Forest. The car seemed to be in one of those disdainful moods. It went ahead joyfully, as if saying: "This is child's play compared with some roads I've seen." I had such confidence in the vehicle by now that the barest suggestion of a let-down was out of the question. Had such a thing happened I should have felt as badly about it as if an old and well-tried friend had betrayed a trust.

My ruminations on motors and humans were suddenly snapped off and I was brought to a stop, not by some impassable donga in the road, not by

a gurgling flood of water, or by a flapper asking for a lift—I was quite ready for that—but by dense black clouds which hit me sideways and immediately blotted out the sunlight and obscured the landscape. I seemed to be in the middle of a hailstorm blown by a steady wind. Dark hard objects stung my face. As I leant over to close the window, with tightly shut eyes, the darkened air in my protected cabin seemed to be full of this strange hail.

Sitting back, rather as one might do in the railway tunnel when the light has failed, I realised I had been caught by a storm of locusts, the dreaded pest which has ravaged Africa since the days of the Pharaohs. I had heard tales of these insects having pulled up trains, which had seemed to me to be beyond human credulity, and finding myself engulfed in the middle of such a swarm, I began to take notice as, brushing the insects off my clothes, I listened to some of the air armada smashing themselves against the windows.

This storm appeared to be about a third of a mile wide, and as far as I could judge, about thirty feet high. Assuming they fly at a speed of about eight miles an hour, this one, which took an hour and twenty minutes, would be approximately ten miles long. Again presuming there was one locust to every cubic yard, which is a modest estimate, there would be over a hundred millions in this particular storm, only a unit of the myriads of these destructive pests which infest Africa from Uganda to Rhodesia.

After a while, when the cloud was thinning, I got out, swept what insects I could out of the car, and went on. I had forgotten that the track was piled inches high with locusts, and was startled beyond words when the car began to skid alarmingly

as the back wheels strove to make headway on this treacherous living surface.

To the right the swarm was settling. The countryside would be as naked as a desert when it rose into the air again. The insects climb up the tall grass eating as they go. Maize disappears before them as if taken by a scythe, and only trees are immune.

Many attempts have been made to compete with this menace. Deep ditches are dug to catch the young locusts before they can fly, when they are called "hoppers," and so destroy them before they take to the air. Burning has been tried latterly, poison has been sprayed on them from aeroplanes, but their numbers are so colossal that the difficulty remains insurmountable, and the locusts are likely to remain in Africa as they have since the days of Moses, defying the efforts of modern science and machinery.

CHAPTER XII

Abercorn and Lake Tanganyika

ABERCORN, standing on the crest of a small hill, overlooking a vast expanse of plain and undulating bush, is marked large on most maps of Africa. Actually it consists of one street which contains a European store, a hotel, a boma, and a few higgledy-piggledy native stores. In the districts immediately round about, over an area as large as Hampshire, an additional sixty residents bring its total white population up to eighty.

In some ways it appears to be a dividing point in Africa, dividing the north and south of the continent. Actually it is many hundreds of miles south from the midway point, which is probably Arusha in the Tanganyika Territory.

It was here that I noticed the first symptoms of what is already one of the white settler's gravest problems—the menace of the Indian trader.

My attention was suddenly arrested by the sight of two Indian women in bright red and green sarongas. Later I saw another couple, and soon I was to find the native stores were owned by these dark-skinned "foreigners."

Throughout my journey along the thousands of miles through the centre of the Union, and so through both the Rhodesias, I had not seen a single Indian. The native stores were all kept by honest, hard-working white people. The garages, petrol pumps, hotels and repair depots were under similar ownership.

I soon learnt that Abercorn was the outpost of the Indian incursion, which, starting from Dar es Salaam, has pushed its way west through Tanganyika to the outskirts of Northern Rhodesia. I was to find later when I entered Tanganyika that all the native trade and most of the European as well was in the hands of these Indians.

This Indian question will certainly become a serious problem in Northern Rhodesia, and is one that will have to be tackled in a downright manner. I can sympathise with the settlers, who view the situation with much alarm. Up till now the white man has done everything in Rhodesia and for Rhodesia. His brain and energy have organised native labour to build houses, roads, railways, bridges and other public works. He has also earned his living as the trader, employing other white men to drive his lorries, cars, and mail-vans, paying good fair wages. No white man can be expected to live and keep up the appearance of a "Bwana" under a salary of twenty pounds a month. The influx of the Indians is rapidly altering conditions. They do not live in a style that white men do, and actually do the same work for five pounds a month. A man employing Indians can, therefore, cut his overhead charges to an immeasurably lower rate than one who employs white men. As a result of this, many of the latter unfortunately come on to the unemployed list, faced with the alternative of taking Indian scaled wages, often from Indian employers.

I found a clear example of this in Abercorn. Many years ago two Westcountrymen came out to this place, and as early pioneers were practically the founders of the settlement. It was they who first started anything in this isolated region. They tried and experimented in various undertakings,

from elephant hunting to house building or coffee farming. No two brothers in Rhodesia are better known or more highly respected. Amongst other things, they started an excellent garage. They also ran all the transport and mail contracts for the area. They paid their two or three white drivers about twenty-five pounds a month. These hard-working capable men, who have been in the country several years, are married.

Now an Indian firm employing Indian drivers is to run in competition. Quite naturally they will be able to cut prices enormously, and so undermine the existing white firm. What are the brothers to do? They cannot run at a loss, and they cannot reduce their men's wages to the scale of native labour, with its ability to live on a handful of food, and its dirty, disease-spreading habits, rendered even more noxious by its half-baked education and scornful antipathy towards the white man.

These Indians are the locusts of this part of Africa, destroying white prestige and white trade as surely as the insects destroy the crops.

This is the situation as I see it. A generation ago our forbears either conquered by force of arms, or obtained by other methods, vast tracts of Africa to be held under the British flag. Was all this expense of life and money to enable Britain's children to develop and live profitably in the countries so annexed, or was it to enable Indians from overseas to drive the white men out of work by labouring at cheap rates? What will the Mother Country do about it?

There is far more genuine patriotism and love of Mother Country in Rhodesia than I have ever noticed at home.

These unfortunate settlers, fettered by distance and lack of adequate representation, view with

concern the defeatist policy pursued by "old women" of both sexes at home and the "blinkerred" ignorance of the Colonial Office. Glib letters are sent, and appear in certain sections of the press, pleading in the name of humanity that the white man, the native and the Indian should be treated as equals.

Look at it this way. Where would Africa be to-day without the white race? Back in its original state of barbarism!

The British Empire owes a great deal to the gallant and hard work of men like these two brothers I have mentioned. They did this work in the early days, at their own expense, and often amid considerable danger.

Now having given up their money and lives to establish a settlement and bring peace, happiness and prosperity to the African native, they are faced with ruin because another type of native, working on the white idea, veneered with white culture, and equipped with white labour methods, is allowed to overrun the country like ants, working at lower costs and existing at a demoralising standard of living.

The white man has done the hard and dangerous work, and the Indian comes in to exploit the result. It is impossible and unthinkable that a white man should be forced to lower his standard of living to that of the Indian.

How pathetic, how cruel it appears to those who really know the situation, to see newspaper advertisements, backed by the goodwill of the Government, urging young people to settle in various parts of Africa.

They arrive full of hope, burning with the same zeal which inspired the early settlers, to find they are faced with this surprising Indian menace.

Some go home with bitter hearts, others hang on resolutely and create a problem for their fellows, who feel embounded to look after them.

Every Rhodesian settler hopes and prays that something will be done to stop the inroad of the Indian settler in time to save Africa for the Britons.

The problem is not only one for the Rhodesian, but all over Central Africa, where Indians are found employing white brains at atrociously low wages, and presenting a colour problem which no nation other than our own would leave unsolved for a day.

At Abercorn I found, too, that my knowledge of kitchen-Kaffir was useless. The natives understood Swahili, another sign of my having reached a dividing line.

This applies even from the point of view of communications. Southwards from Abercorn supplies and stores are brought up by the railway running from Cape Town through the Union, across the Zambesi and up through the Rhodesias, until it finally ends in the Belgian Congo. This railway is also connected up with the line which joins it from Beira. Abercorn receives its supplies from the railway which runs from Dar es Salaam to Kigoma, on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika, and from there by boat to Umpulungu, situated at the extreme southern end of the lake, where they are brought the remaining thirty miles by road.

The route to Lake Tanganyika is bad, dipping steeply for twenty-seven miles between thickly bushed mountains. Twice we stuck in the sand. The physical labour involved in getting out was not made any easier by the intense heat. The nearer we got to the Lake the higher the temperature, until we seemed to be rattling along on the floor of a boundless oven.

At Umpulungu, a small collection of huts set on what seemed to be a bay in some great sea, the heat was almost unbearable. In twenty-seven miles we had dropped three thousand feet.

For sheer splendour the lake itself takes one's breath away. Some four hundred and fifty miles long, forty miles wide, and four thousand five hundred feet deep, it is the most southern of all the lakes in the Great Rift Valley, that great fault in the earth's surface stretching from Rhodesia perhaps into Asia. It is the second deepest lake in the world. Great bush-covered heights fall precipitously into seemingly dense black water, lukewarm to the touch, so fierce is the heat of the sun. As I stood regarding its wonders a storm dropped out of the sky as suddenly as a bomb, and that dark surface suddenly became a raging fury. These sudden storms make it highly dangerous to venture out far in a small boat. My friend George Gonin, who had come with me from Abercorn, suggested fishing, so we set off in search of tiger fish, with ordinary spinning rods, reel and spoon, catching four in two hours the largest weighing ten pounds. The fish put up a magnificent fight, incomparably greater than any salmon. At the first rush they will take out yards of line, jump out of the water, and then bore down vertically to a great depth. A gimp trace is essential as their teeth will soon cut through gut. It is also advisable to wear a glove to prevent the fingers becoming seared by the line.

While we were fishing near the banks, crocodiles and hippos raised their heads out of the water to look around and breathe, and sank again immediately as the boat approached.

I cannot imagine a more beautiful sight than dusk at Lake Tanganyika. As the sun set and the



*Great North Road
Northern Rhodesia*



*Van crossing
native made
bridge*

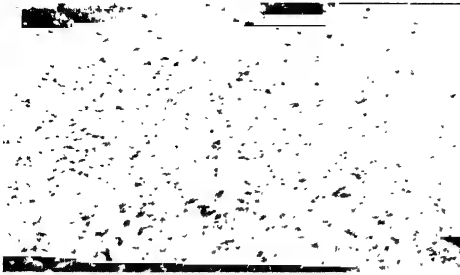


Crossing by pontoon

Chambesi River

*Author returning
to camp from
fishing
Note Buffalo head
in punt*





*A tiny portion of a
swarm of Locusts*



*Plump bellied
naked child*



*"Great bush covered
escarpments fall
precipitously"*

Lake Tanganyika

moon appeared over the great mountains, the dark opaqueness of this almost frightening mass of water was transmitted into a sort of silvery phosphorescence. The air was filled with the almost deafening booming of the frogs. As we came ashore in the dark, myriads of fireflies pirouetted roguishly in the blackness, like tiny pinheads of light, adding their fairy lustre to the eerie beauty of what, to me, was another new wonder of Africa.

CHAPTER XIII

Lake Rukwa

I DID a lot of wild fowling around Abercorn. There are many large areas covered with swamps, veritable homes for duck and geese. Red-billed teal and spur-winged geese are particularly common. The latter are so called because of the formidable fighting spur carried on the carpal joint of the wing. They are very large birds, weighing twelve or fourteen pounds and have a tough skin, and are by no means easy to bring down. There were also several double snipe. Snipe as a rule are not numerous in Africa south of the Equator.

Many an evening was spent almost waist deep in water awaiting the evening flight. But it is not exactly a picnic, for Africa produces her torments for the sportsman. Not only do midges and mosquitoes drive one almost mad, but leeches attach themselves in dozens to bare legs. However, socks pulled over a pair of flannel trousers defeated the attention of these loathsome pests.

Gonin urged me not to leave the area without visiting Rukwa, which he described as the most magnificent place for bird and game in the whole of Africa. He was immensely keen to go himself, so after a frantic rush into Abercorn one morning to get stores, pots and pans, tinned food and more petrol, we set off.

At the Tanganyika frontier the landscape changed in an extraordinary way. Ever since the Limpopo

River, I had been going through two thousand miles of everlasting bush. Here, the bush vanished, as if by magic, to be replaced by lofty mountains and rolling plains. During the day, as usual, there was little wild life to be seen on the plains. But every now and then we passed that which I had come to regard as the aristocrat of all African fauna—the secretary bird. I had seen him in the open spaces all the way from the Cape. He seemed to me to possess all the qualities of a well bred Old English gamecock, though immensely bigger; active, clean limbed, racy looking. I am glad to say he is protected, probably on account of his snake killing ability, albeit his staple diet is insects. He is quite common, particularly in Rhodesia. As the Government had recently spent a lot of money on it, the road was worthy of the name.

How minute the world can be even in the middle of loneliness. Just before the frontier we came on two white men sitting glooming beside a broken-down lorry. Appreciate that the nearest civilisation, Abercorn, was one hundred and twenty miles away, and that probably one car a week passes along the road, and you will appreciate what our appearance meant to them. I was surprised to find that one of the stranded travellers was Commander Blunt, R.N. We had lunched together at the "Army and Navy" before I left for Africa. He had been stuck on the roadside for two days with magneto trouble beyond repair. He was also very short of stores. Having fixed them up with what we had, we pushed on and promised to send a telegram at the next station. I hope the telegram arrived and that he is not still stuck in that lonely spot.

After climbing up and down several escarpments amidst glorious scenery, we got to M'Beya, a

distance of a hundred and ninety-three miles from Abercorn. It is most beautifully situated underneath Mount M'Beya, nine thousand feet high, the tallest peak in the M'Beya Range. The settlement contains an hotel and store, D.C.'s office, Customs and Police Offices, and several Indian and native stores. One day it may become a very important place, for not only is it one of the landing places for Imperial Airways machines, but it is the jumping off place for the Lupa goldfields, which lie behind the mountains in the Lupa valley, fifty miles away to the north. In this fever-ridden district, some five hundred white people are everlastingly panning the rivers and streams for alluvial gold, and prospecting for the ever-elusive reef. Each month these untiring optimists extract roughly some seven thousand pounds worth of gold. Much of it is expended in obtaining supplies from the M'Beya store.

The hotel at M'Beya, owned by Mr. Menzies, is always full. Mr. Menzies, whose pleasant and softly-intoned speech as well as his name betokens his Highland ancestry, is the principal gold buyer.

Through his hospitable doors flows a constant stream of passengers brought by Imperial Airways, and here every night forgather a strange assortment of people, drawn from many hundreds of miles around.

An incoming machine had landed with a full quota of passengers on the day we arrived. Dinner provided me with an opportunity to study the passengers at close quarters. At one table were a mining magnate of Johannesburg, a solicitor and his wife, and a stockbroker from the Cape, whose neat clothes denoted lives spent in the city rather than in the wilds. At another, Collingwood, the District Commissioner, was talking to a young

police officer whose name I have forgotten. With them was Hodges, a famous flying ace during the war, and now in charge of the aerodrome, and Shepherd, the cheery Irish pilot of the machine which had just arrived. Nearby was a man called Bentley with his pretty wife and a friend, just completing a hazardous trip through German West Africa, and on their way to Nairobi and the Nile.

I was more interested, though, in a most breezy, but not altogether noiseless party at the far end of the room. They were mining-engineers, diggers and prospectors from the Lupa, men and women of all nationalities, ages and types; some wore lounge suits, one or two sported dinner jackets, for a dance was to be held that night, and others provided a sharp contrast in rough corduroy trousers, open-necked shirts—the short-sleeved shirt that is the badge of those who work by the sweat of their brows and have no time nor desire to change into the *fal-de-das* of fashion.

After an excellent dinner I leant against the bar to take a closer view of even more picturesque figures who had never left its hospitable support since I had been in the hotel. These strong men, wrinkled and weather-stained of face, grizzled with age and toil and sun-dried to the colour of mahogany, reminded me of the stories of the Klondyke.

I admit I gasped when an argument broke out, and I saw one of them push a bottle of gold dust across the bar to pay for his drink. Others were bartering their gold for stores. When it was all gone, they would trek back to Lupa, to take up that ceaseless washing and panning—but not before. I could have stayed all night watching this fascinating, colourful picture out of the past.

The next day was spent enquiring about licences, customs, and filling up with stores and petrol. Game licences are considerably more expensive in Tanganyika than in Rhodesia. A full licence costs seventy-five pounds, but a temporary one, which permits the killing of a fair amount of varieties, can be obtained for ten pounds. Dangerous vermin (as they are called), i.e., lions, leopards and buffalo, can be shot for nothing.

It was here that I engaged the first and only "personal" boy I ever had in Africa. This one, "John Kapianga" by name, was to stay with me throughout the rest of the trip, and a better or more faithful servant no man could wish for. A finely built Ukamba boy, he had served in the King's African Rifles in the War. Since then he had been driving lorries. He had perfect manners, and his neat, smart personality was unspoilt by his association with white civilisation. He spoke a little English, drove a car fairly well, was a good mechanic, an excellent valet and cook, and was scrupulously honest. He knew nothing about hunting, but he accompanied me from now on, on every occasion when I was out on safari. He was nearly killed twice by a buffalo whilst with me, but he kept smiling and his nerve never left him. I paid him three pounds a month—good wages out there—and owe him an everlasting debt for one great service.

The following morning at dawn, loaded with stores and equipment, we all set off over the very treacherous and difficult track to Lake Rukwa, which lies some seventy miles to the north. George had two boys with him. Skirting the western spurs of the M'Beya Range, the road, full of ruts and potholes, fell precipi-

tously, often across steep dongas, and submerged beneath occasional streams. The water was often over the running-board. We got stuck in several of these steeply-banked streams, owing to the deep sand in their beds. Hour after hour we toiled steadily on, almost at walking pace, down into the great Rukwa Basin. The temperature rose as we fell, until by mid-day it was almost intolerable. In forty miles we had dropped three thousand feet, where, leaving the great mountain escarpments behind, we ploughed across the vast sandy, bush-covered plain surrounding Lake Rukwa.

The headman came out to meet us, and on hearing what we wanted, led us off across country, courteously showing us a suitable camping place under high thorn trees, in which hung many weaver birds' nests, within ten yards of the Songwe River.

This headman—or "Jumbo," as he is locally called—was named André. He was of the Wawunga tribe. I took an instant liking to him. The first evening in camp is always the most uncomfortable, especially after a really filthy journey, but André proved to be the soul of hospitality and efficiency. Within an hour of our arrival he marshalled the "boys" from his small village, with their wives and children, and set them to make camp for us. They worked with the bustling activity of ants. The men cut poles, the women reaped bundles of long, dry grass, and the plump-bellied, naked children were stripping bark from trees. Although there only remained two hours of daylight by the time the sun set, two excellent "bandas," or grass huts appeared as if from nowhere. In the meantime, our own boys were unpacking the cars and had commenced making a kitchen.

I could not resist a stroll round the immediate vicinity of our camp. It showed me we were in a veritable wonderland of nature. The district literally teemed with game. Grazing in the long, rough grass were hundreds of puku, reedbuck, bushbuck and oribi. I shot two reedbuck as meat for the boys and soup for ourselves. By seven p.m. our camp was partially finished, with a camp fire lit for us and another for the boys. Our first dinner consisted of reedbuck soup, eggs, and a mixed grill of buck's kidneys, liver and bacon. Native cooks are wonderfully gifted in being able to produce a really good dinner over a fire made of a few sticks.

On the first night our chairs and table were petrol cases, but I rarely enjoyed a dinner so much. George had brought a gramophone with him, and here under the stars, with the air dancing with mosquitoes and midges, we smoked our pipes and listened to the latest dance tunes. Ten yards away the boys squatted round another fire, a chattering circle of naked, shiny bodies. They were evidently discussing us. George's house boy, immaculately dressed in a white jumper and shorts, evidently considered himself the big man of the party, for was he not the head servant of the the "Bwana" Gonin? With amazing gesture and much pantomime, we could glimpse him telling his new acquaintances what a great "Bwana" his white master was, and no doubt adding what he knew of me. During all this conversation they were putting bits of meat into the embers of their fire, and nibbling continuously.

The whole secret in camp life is to get a system organised properly from the start. Otherwise chaos reigns. We sent for André, the

headman. He approached silently and stood at attention, in a dignified rather than servile posture. I gave him a cigarette, which he accepted with a boyish grin. Then he settled himself down cross-legged by our fire, and listened attentively. We wanted the camp completed by to-morrow, a proper hut made for each of us, an open-sided shelter as a dining room, a store hut, and a table and some chairs made. We also wanted three other hunting boys, a boy to collect wood, another to keep a supply of water for the camp, and two others to make themselves generally useful to the cook and the house boy. At each instruction, interpreted by John, André would gravely nod his wise head and say "Ndio, Bwana" ("Yes, sir"). André was one of the best types of native I ever met. He organised everything for us perfectly, and he and the members of his village and our own boys became fast friends immediately.

When I mentioned shooting to André, a marked change came over his face. The grave demeanour vanished and a light gleamed in his eye. Here was a natural hunter, if I had ever seen one. Yes, there was much game, he said "nyati" (buffalo), "tembo" (elephant), "simba" (lion), "chui" (leopard) and all the other "nyama" (animals). Much of them. He himself would hunt with us and there would be much meat for all to eat. Also he would send his boys to inform the local chief of our arrival, and discover the latest news of the movements of the game. The lake, he said was full of "samaki" (fish), as was the Songwe River, and there were hundreds of "bata" (duck), geese, "kwale" (partridges) and "kanga" (guinea-fowl). His torrent of information was unceasing. He would show

us everything ; he was delighted we had come, and he hoped we would stay a long time.

I jumped at the opportunity of taking such an intelligent, serious-minded and well informed man, and immediately made him my head hunting "boy," keeping John as my personal "boy," a function which he performed as efficiently as any valet I have ever struck in more civilised parts. John was a contrast to most natives in that he was scrupulously clean. Doubtless this was due to the discipline of his service with the King's African Rifles. If he wore a white shirt, it was really white, in keeping with the rest of his limited attire.

Over the last pipe we decided to start at dawn next morning.

Gaggle after gaggle of geese passed over us on the way from the lake to their feeding grounds in the rough grass round our camp, and duck were constantly flying along the course of the river. Every now and then we could hear splashes from the river, as some animal came down to drink, and often the frightened whistle of a reedbuck disturbed by some marauding beast. Jackals and hyenas were giving tongue all around us, and now and then the velvety bark of the leopards separated itself from the medley of jungle sounds. I stood up suddenly and flashed a torch round the camp. The ray lit up innumerable pairs of eyes ; they belonged to the buck grazing silently in the long grass.

We turned in, tired but somewhat excited, lulled to sleep by the chant of frogs and crickets, and kept awake by the menacing buzzing of mosquitoes. There was no chill in the air. Here in the Rukwa Valley the tropical temperature made even a blanket unnecessary.

We seemed hardly to have fallen asleep when we were awakened by frenzied shouts from the boys, who seemed to be in the last stage of terror. The cause was a mighty stampeding of heavy animals. Stumbling up, I seized my rifle and darted out, to find George had got there first. There before us, lit up by the moon, as brightly as by the light of an acetylene lamp, were three massive elephants. They charged clean through our camp, pounding away across the clearing into the rough grass beyond. How they missed the huts is a miracle.

We ran across to the boys to see if they were hurt, and found them very terribly scared, but uninjured. Natives are always nervous in the dark. They sleep with blankets tightly wound round their heads, as if to keep out the nocturnal noises.

Seeing George and myself with our rifles allayed their fears, and they relaxed almost instantly into deep sleep. We, however, went back to bed with restless anticipation in our minds, after our strange introduction to this wonderful game country.

Let me give some idea of the country. Lake Rukwa is one of the smaller lakes at the extreme southern end of the Great Rift Valley. It is thirty-five miles long and about fifteen miles wide, and lies in a large and completely flat basin. It is probable that originally the whole of this great depression was covered with water, but now it is little more than a gigantic marsh. The permanent water, which is slightly brackish, occupies but a fraction of the whole area and varies with the annual rainfall. Bush-covered mountains closely border it on the northern side, while on the southern it is surrounded by a belt

of level ground varying in width between one and three miles. This ground is covered in grass. Beyond this there is bush. The shores of the Lake itself are covered with very fine volcanic dust, which blows about in the slightest wind. Dotted around the edges and in the lake itself, are lagoons and swamps, reed patches and sandbanks. Into the south-eastern corner flows the river Songwe, and in the last few miles of its course it forms a delta. Off the main river, and running parallel to it, are a number of sandy river beds, dry at this time of year, but raging torrents in the rains. In the wet season, the whole of this delta and the site of our camp is a swamp. The river itself, and its dry subsidiaries, are flanked with dense bamboo, several hundred yards in depth. In between are broad, flat open spaces covered with coarse grass and reeds, sometimes five feet in height. There are also patches of thorn trees, sweeping green palms and other tropical vegetation. These open spaces are the feeding ground of a countless number of animals, and the bamboo swamps provide shelter for buffalo, elephants and hippos during the heat of the day.

The dawn was just breaking when John announced that André and his boys were ready. I went out wearing only a shirt, a pair of shorts, shoes and hat. André and his three hunters were waiting by the rekindled embers of their own camp fire.

He smilingly gave the greeting, "Jambo," which literally means, "I am well, are you?" It is the native "good morning," or "how do you do?"

Wading across the shallows of the Songwe River, close to our camp, we entered the thick bamboos, and pursuing our way along a game trail, came out into a large open vlei, covered with rough

yellowish grass and reeds three or four feet high. To our left there was a great mass of bamboo, and we worked our way in single file quietly along the outside of it, with André leading. As the sun rose, the vlei on our right presented a wonderful spectacle. In the rough grass and reeds, often so high that their heads were only just visible, were hundreds of puku, reedbuck and oribi. They took comparatively little notice, allowing us generally to get within a hundred yards of them before they moved off.

Sweet scented mimosa trees in full flower were dotted along the side of the great bamboo belt on the left. The tops of all these trees seemed to be alive with birds; great fish-hawks, white-headed eagles, and storks, herons and brilliant blue jays, pelicans, flamingoes and cranes were in any number. As we went along we constantly disturbed duck and geese which still lingered on their feeding grounds.

But we were after buffalo. We went on round the edge of the bamboo for an hour, until André suddenly stiffened; as we were rounding a bend five elephants were plainly visible, about a hundred and fifty yards away, just on the edge of the vlei. We were not shooting elephants, but I wanted to see how near we could get, and if possible obtain a photograph. We stalked them with infinite caution, often creeping through the grass on our hands and knees.

In the meantime our quarry had moved to the outer edges of the bamboos and were playfully pulling down great masses with their trunks. The distance lessened to a hundred yards, then to fifty, and finally down to about thirty. When the noise of the breaking of the bamboos stopped, we could hear the rumblings of their great stomachs.

Very stealthily we lifted our heads above the reeds to get a fuller view of these enormous animals. There were three bulls, a cow and a calf, none with really big tusks. They looked surprisingly large at so close a range. We decreased the distance by another five yards and then stopped and watched again for several minutes.

There evidently must have been some wind, for suddenly the breaking of the bamboos stopped, the internal rumblings ceased, and they stood stock still, with ears cocked like stiffened fans, alert as only wild animals can be when they sense danger. Then the cow turned round and faced the direction where we knelt motionless. What were they going to do? I knew little about elephants. To be within twenty-five yards of the huge beasts, obviously suspicious, makes one wonder, somewhat anxiously. I cocked my rifle silently, in case of emergency; at such close range I felt exceedingly tiny.

For breathless minutes all five stood motionless, looking in our direction, and then the cow turned round and moved away from us. Intensely relieved, we watched them slowly plough their way into the depth of the bamboos. They could not have seen us. We continued our search for buffalo.

By this time the sun was mounting steadily, and the heat became severe. At mid-day neither native nor white man can go far without drinking. The throat becomes hot and parched to the degree of agony. The Rukwa Valley is probably one of the hottest places in Central Africa. Later on we found fresh buffalo spoor entering the bamboo, but although we followed, hour by hour, often waist deep in this wet, thick morass, through swamps and mud pock-marked with great elephant and hippo holes into which we often fell, we never

came up to our game, and gave up through sheer exhaustion.

Hunting in such country, under these trying conditions, you have to be on the spoor almost immediately after the animals enter the bamboo. Although some of the antelope and buck seemed to hang about on the vleis until the sun was well up in the sky, we soon found that the buffalo entered these mosquito-infested swamps before the sun was over the horizon.

Arriving back at camp about 2 p.m.—we had been on the move ceaselessly since 5.30 a.m.—we found the place to be a hive of industry. André's villagers were completing the finishing touches. Four excellent grass huts had been constructed. Our "dining-room" now possessed a splendid, stout-looking table and also chairs, very cleverly made from bamboo rods tied together with bark strippings and comfortably padded with grass.

It is useless to hunt at mid-day, and in any case it was impossible here on account of the heat. Usually, we went out before dawn and came back to camp soon after noon, to rest from then until 4 p.m., when we went out again until dark.

One evening, accompanied by André and John, we set out to inspect Lake Rukwa. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the animal and bird life here. The great flats which bordered the lake were dappled with hundreds of buck of all kinds, and zebra. In the sepia-coloured bush at the edge of the flats we met eland, waterbuck and roan antelope. Every few yards partridges, pheasants and guinea-fowl scattered away at the approach of our footsteps.

The lake itself is an amazing sight ; it is shallow, and resembles very closely a duck estuary in Holland. Never anywhere before have I seen

so many different kinds of birds and in such numbers. Countless vari-coloured duck, teal and geese ; cranes, storks, pelicans, herons, egrets, flamingoes, sandpipers, plovers and dunlins, and divers of many varieties, went skywards with a concerted roar of their wings as we disturbed them.

In addition to this almost incredible bird population, the lake seemed to be teeming with fish. The bream are in limitless numbers. I watched the natives wading out and catching them in dozens by merely making a casual sweep round with rough string nets in this crocodile infested area. More extraordinary is the behaviour of the legion of crocodiles. Never yet has a crocodile been known to harm a fisherman. They probably eat so many fish that they do not worry about anything like human flesh.

The best time to shoot duck is in the evening. We waded out on to one of the innumerable reed-covered sandbanks, waiting for the flights. Again, the crocodiles took no more notice than just quietly slipping their ugly bulks into the water as we approached.

Towards sunset the wild fowl commence flying to their feeding grounds along the edges of the lake, and pass over the sandbanks and sedge surrounded lagoons. They come over in hundreds and provide the best shooting imaginable. There are many varieties. The most common are the black duck, the red-billed teal, the yellow-billed duck, the South African pochard, the salmon-cheeked teal, the spur-winged goose and the Egyptian goose. There are no varieties of duck or teal that correspond with those in Europe, although the salmon-cheeked teal is very similar to the English one, except that it has salmon-coloured cheeks and scapulars instead of green.

One could stand and shoot here until tired. Sometimes at the sound of the shots, the hippos would put their noses out of the water and grunt lazily, and then submerge again. We found it essential to have a few boys hidden in the reeds behind to pick up the birds as they fell into the water; it was often a race as to who would get the dead duck first—the crocodile or the native. It was a most extraordinary sight to see the boys and the crocodiles together in the water, scrambling for the game. Nowhere else have I ever met such harmless and genteel crocodiles.

The arrival of the sandgrouse at the water's edge just before sundown is a great spectacle. During the day they have been scattered out far away in the arid spaces, and as evening approaches they collect into small coveys and fly to the sides of the lake in order to drink. Covey after covey comes in a continuous stream, flying not unlike high grouse. Sandgrouse make excellent shooting, for they are by no means easy to hit. Their evening flight will last for at least an hour, and one can shoot almost incessantly during this period, so continuously and determinedly do they come. No-one who really wishes either to study bird life or to shoot wild fowl should miss this wonderful bird paradise. I, personally, know of no place in the world which can compare with it—not even Holland.

We arrived back in our camp laden with fish, duck, teal and sandgrouse. The latter are slightly different to the species found in Southern Rhodesia, as the throats are yellow, whereas the "Namaqua Partridge," which is the usual variety of sandgrouse found in Southern Rhodesia, is more brown. The species at Rukwa is known as the yellow-throated sandgrouse.

Dinner that night was a great affair ; reedbuck soup, followed by a fish course of bream, and then an excellent teal each, finishing up with welsh rarebit. John was buying eggs at fifty a shilling.

The following morning André informed us that the Chief of the whole tribe had arrived to pay his compliments, and wished us to hunt in a district where his village was situated, some ten miles away. M'Weniwungo of the Wabungu, to give him his full name, was a dignified, grizzled old man, dressed in a long flowing white garment, surmounted by a short black coat. He was accompanied by his son, wearing merely a dirty brown draping tied round one shoulder, and a very large, battered slouch hat. We received this oddly assorted pair with due formality, John acting as interpreter. They were exceedingly polite, and there seemed to be no doubt that they were most keen for us to come to their village, where, they said, was any amount of game. I accepted the old man's gift of three eggs, and after consultation with André decided to go over to the village. Feeling that we should do something by way of returning this unexpected hospitality, I found a tin of cigarettes and presented it to the chief and his son. No present could have pleased them more. They plodded away, chattering and laughing, after we had promised to follow in a few hour's time.

Several hours later the entire village turned out to meet us. We drove in to a triumphal welcome of hand-clapping. The friendliness of the people in this district was most remarkable, and whether this was due to the fact that the Germans instilled more discipline than the British is a matter of conjecture—this used to be a German Colony. Later I asked the old chief his opinion of German rule as against English. He gave me the astonish-

ing reply that "the Germans were men, whereas the English *were soft!*" Natives understand severe, but just, discipline. Unless it is enforced they will soon learn contempt.

Leaving the village, we penetrated an undulating bush country, abounding with reedbuck, puku, impala and waterbuck. Once we got close up to three elephants and skirted round them undetected, and then suddenly encountered fairly recent buffalo spoor. As it was now about 4.30 p.m., leaving us at the most one and a half hours daylight, we had little chance of coming up with them before dark. Twice we ran into a herd of roan antelope, and once came quite close to a fine eland bull.

Coming unexpectedly to a small clearing, a crowd of impala saw us and dashed off, swirling about like so many leaves in the wind. Immediately there was a mighty crashing of branches. The impala had disturbed the buffalo we had been so anxiously following. On the way back we shot two waterbuck bulls. These were shot as a present to our friend the Chief.

Again we were greeted with much laughing and clapping of hands. In a very short time most of the men, armed with knives, and the women carrying baskets upon their heads, departed to cut up the meat. I fell to wondering again why it was that here, in a country literally full of game, the natives seldom appear to kill meat for themselves, yet were so delighted with it when it was shot for them.

Carnivorous animals soon find a camp. The first night was comparatively quiet, but as time progressed hyenas, jackals and even leopards became increasingly bold, lurking around in the bush close to us. They were obviously attracted by the smell of the meat so inseparable from camp life, and

by the strings of dried biltong which the boys hung up. One night the leopards, perhaps the boldest and most dangerous of all animals in the dark, broke into our improvised larder, and carried off everything that was in it, right under our noses. One or two eventually paid for their boldness.

George Gonin told me he was becoming more and more attracted to Lake Rukwa itself, and to the duck and sandgrouse shooting, and so we arranged that he should spend most of his time exploring this district, whilst I went after the buffalo and other large game in the bamboo swamps of the Songwe River.

Next morning, André and I left camp an hour before dawn. He was becoming impatient that we had not yet killed a buffalo. We took with us the three other hunting boys, who went by the names of "Joseph," "Magazine" and "Wendapoli." Joseph acted as second gun-bearer, Magazine assisted André in spooring. Wandapoli, which interpreted means "go slowly," was a big, hulking boy. He was well named, for he was always behind and somewhat lazy. His task was to carry drinking water. At mid-day the blistering heat was so intense that not even the natives could continue without it.

Crossing the Songwe River, we made our way across the great delta, through high grass-covered flats, intersected here and there by dense yellow-brown bamboo swamps. Every now and then we would cross dry sandy river courses, bordered with luxurious tropical growth. The sand was thickly covered with spoor of every description, for all animals had to cross it in order to find feeding and drinking grounds. The banks themselves stood out of the sand between three and five feet. Underneath them burrowed in the sandy beds



"Sand thickly covered with spoor"

Dry river bed, Songue Delta



"Lying motionless shading himself in thick undergrowth"

A Crocodile



John and André with dead Crocodile



*river bed heavily flanked with
bamboo*

*Underneath the banks lie many
Crocodiles*

were innumerable holes. These were full of water. Nearly every one contained a crocodile. Dozens and dozens of these reptiles, some of enormous size, lay motionless on the top of the banks, shading themselves in the thick undergrowth. Although we passed within a few feet of them, looking for buffalo spoor, they took not the slightest notice of us.

Walking along the sand we saw every track imaginable; lion, leopard, antelope and buck, whilst every now and then, as a variation, the long indentations made by the crocodiles' tails. And then suddenly appeared what we wanted—buffalo spoor, quite fresh, showing they could not be far ahead. We entered the bamboo and followed as swiftly as was possible.

Now spooring in this class of cover, especially in swamps, is anything but easy. You simply cannot move quietly. The sog of the water as one's feet sink into the mud, and the brushing against the innumerable rods lying across the trail, make this impossible. For a quarter of a mile we worked our way through this jungle, until we emerged into one of the many open reed-covered flats. There, three hundred yards away on the far side, near another great patch of bamboo, was a herd of buffalo, heading for cover.

In this district they are invariably accompanied by tick birds and white egrets. The former live on the innumerable bugs which infest these animals, and the egrets are always in close attendance. Buffalo pay a great deal of attention to tick birds. Should these feathered watchers become alarmed, the whole herd will immediately stampede. But if anything upsets the egret, they appear to take no notice—another riddle of the wild. We were faced with the added difficulty of approaching,

without disturbing either the tick birds or the animals. The dense growth made it almost impossible to see more than a few yards. The egrets proved more a help than a hindrance. As the herd entered the bamboos, the egrets flew up lazily and soon settled again just inside, showing us that the animals were only moving slowly.

We made our way swiftly through the thick reeds and grass, and entered the thicket about fifty yards on the downwind side of where we had last seen them enter. André crept slowly forward after a moment's pause. I have no idea how he knew where they were; it might be by uncanny instinct. I rather think it was by long practice and intense skill.

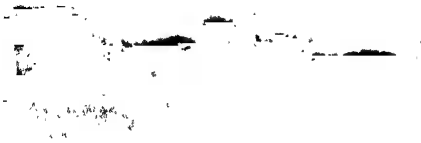
After what appeared to be an immeasurable period of crawling, moving one foot after another with infinite caution, he suddenly stopped, looking straight ahead. I crept to his side, and espied the herd, heavily screened by the bamboos, not fifteen yards away. They were in mud well above their fetlocks, standing with their heads close together. Near as they were, the bamboos were so thick that I could not even then see a vital spot to shoot at. Good hunter that André was, he also had that failing that is common to nearly all natives. They will spoor with the highest skill and silence, but when actually up to the animal, they become impatient to see it shot immediately. It is extremely difficult to keep them quiet. They cannot appreciate that only the vital shot matters. I observed that André was becoming very excited, and was terrified lest they would see him shaking and moving his hands about, giving vent to uncontrollable hisses. Suddenly I could just see a big head through the bamboo. In the next second I fired.



Author's camp, Songue Delta



s, 4 to 5 feet high



*Mimosa, Thorn
and Chilala*



*M'weniungo,
his son and
André*



*My hunting boys :
Left to right—
Magazine,
Joseph,
Wendapoli,
André*



*The haunt of
innumerable
wildfowl*

*A lagoon,
Lake Rukwa*

The tick birds and egrets flew up at once, as my animal dropped without a sound, but the rest, with a staccato bellow of alarm, plunged madly round and faced us, lined up head to head, staring in our direction. I found another head, and fired again, and yet again. Then they broke, charging off into the thickly covered morass with a mighty thrashing of bamboos and squelching of mud. I was relieved to see them break when they did. André had been constantly telling me that buffalo in these swamps were very "Baya" (bad-dangerous).

In the bamboos, ten yards in front of us, lying dead, almost in a heap, were three fairly good bulls. The glint in André's eyes showed me how pleased he was. Unable to control his pent up feelings, he immediately started jabbing them with his spear.

Magazine, the second spoorer, had kept his head more than we had, and had dashed off down the trail, following the flight of the egrets. Soon he returned to say he thought he knew where the herd had gone. André was most anxious to continue the chase, and so, sending Joseph back to camp to inform the village, we followed the observant Magazine.

Three hundred yards brought us to the edge of the bamboo, then across a reed-covered flat, through more bamboo, across two dry river beds, more bamboos, more reed flats, until we ran into the spoor close to a muddy, heavily bushed marsh. As we stood motionless a few egrets flew up close by, and settled again in the bush. Magazine had unerringly brought us right up with them. Silently we knelt on the ground, waited and listened. A squelch of a hoof and the breaking of a rod! They were close to.

André, keen and gallant, crept forward like a

stalking cat. I have never seen a hunter as keen as this boy. His eye was as keen as a hawk's. We had hardly entered the bamboo when he stopped. Our buffalo were quite close to us. One great head was clearly visible, and I got a successful shot. In this case the herd behaved in an entirely different manner. They broke at once, bellowing and roaring, and started to mill round and round us, thrashing the bamboos down like so much corn. I could not see them, close as they were, but I could see the tops of the growth being smashed down before them, now this way, now that. Their next rush might bring them charging straight at us. André and I sat together motionless, waiting. They seemed to thrash their way round us many times. The nerve tension became unbearable, until eventually they broke out of the bamboos and thundered along the edge of the reeds and long grass into the thick jungle, followed by a protective cloud of tick birds and egrets.

We were now hot and exhausted by the sweltering heat, so after a short rest we worked our way back to camp, several miles away.

Those who stalk in Scotland well know how long the trek back to the lodge seems, when one has got a stag late in the evening, on the far edge of the forest. That walk back to the camp under a broiling sun seemed to have no end. After we had gone some miles, we met the long line of excited, chattering villagers, on their way to cut up the meat and to bring in the heads. André told them the news as they crowded around him. What he said I do not know, but it was soon evident he was considered a "big man" and a great hunter.

We recrossed the Songwe River and got back to camp about 3 p.m. A bathe in the river and

something to eat soon refreshed us. Just before sunset I was disturbed by much singing across the river, and shortly afterwards a long string of villagers appeared, walking in single file. Men, women and children were walking in easy rhythm, carrying enormous pieces of meat.

That night as we sat over our camp fire, I watched the boys sitting round theirs. André was standing up. The three other hunting boys, our "personal" boys, and various others were squatting round on their haunches, watching wide-eyed and open-mouthed. André was talking slowly and deliberately; what he was saying did not reach us, but his acting was amazing. Time after time he went over the details of the day's hunting, with elaborate pantomime. Everything was perfectly mimicked—the spotting of the buffalo, the stalking, the shot, the thundering of the hooves as they crashed away, the milling round of furious beasts, and finally the dramatic curtain, our hero, André, stabbing the dead animals with his spear.

He certainly was the "great man" of the party, and held the floor convincingly. There was no interruption beyond an occasional grunt of appreciation from his listeners, as they jabbed their knives into the embers for pieces of meat. We could hear him acting his part to his enthralled audience long after we turned in.

And so followed ten days of the most marvellous mixed sport I personally have ever known. While George confined his attentions and energy to the wonders of Lake Rukwa, André and I hunted in the Songwe Delta. Day after day, we would spend in its bamboo swamps or great reed-covered flats, the latter full of every kind of buck and antelope. Sometimes we toiled hour after hour fruitlessly looking for buffalo spoor,

only to have to return to camp empty handed, except for a buck or two killed solely for meat.

Sometimes after following the spoor, and when close up to our quarry, our hopes would be dashed to the ground by the scaring of some other animal or bird which gave alarm and stampeded the herd. Sometimes luck would be on our side, and we would get close up to a mob in this thick jungle ; moments of intense excitement and thrill.

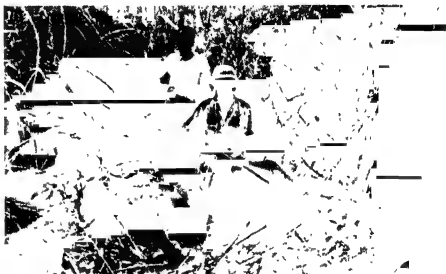
I found it impossible to tell what would happen after the first shot ; these buffalo never acted the same on any two occasions. Sometimes they would stampede away immediately ; at others they would mill around and around, snorting and thrashing down the bamboos ; more than once they wheeled, to stand motionless, facing in our direction. On two memorable occasions they charged over us in a downwind stampede, but we were lucky enough to kill the leading animal each time, with the result that the rest thundered by on each side, leaving us unharmed.

By this time I had allowed André to use my second gun. He understood the mechanism of a rifle, having seen some service under the Germans in their occupation of Tanganyika. But he was far from being a good shot. Immediately I had conferred this great honour on him, his chief joy seemed to be to put a bullet into a dead or dying animal. He was inordinately proud of the rifle, which undoubtedly gave him great confidence.

On the occasions when buffalo stood still or milled round, I had the greatest difficulty in preventing the other boys from running away. They generally bolted, but never André. Perfectly calm, clutching the precious rifle, he would sit or stand motionless at my side. He was the only native hunter I ever had who did not run from a charging



*John and the boys
manhandling 2½-ton
hippo from a pool*



André



John and André

*marvellous haunt
of animal, bird and
fish life*

The Songue River





*" He was inordinately
proud of his rifle "*

André



Joseph



Native women waiting for buffalo meat



*André and Joseph spooring
buffalo across dry river bed
into bamboo*

buffalo. True, his marksmanship at times gave me more anxiety than the buffalo, but I endured that, knowing him to be the best spoorer and bravest native I ever encountered.

One evening we had amused ourselves shooting crocodiles in the bamboos by the dry river banks. Next morning we happened to be following along the outside of this belt, when the quiet dawn air in the direction of the river bed was suddenly split by the deep, full-throated roar of a lion. We crept along the trail through the thicket, and silently dropped down the bank. About forty yards away, standing over one of the dead crocodiles from the evening before, stood a big yellow lion. Hunter's luck! A .275 bullet did all that was necessary. The lion had stayed late, eating the crocodile, and was just about to withdraw into his lair. I was surprised that a lion should eat crocodile, but André told me the lions would eat anything in this district, even raiding the heaps of dried fish which the natives leave to dry on the shores of Lake Rukwa.

Our final adventure in this district is worth recording.

The old Chief appeared one morning, in a state of great agitation. Several lions had been reported in thick bush near the lake some miles from our camp, and had killed several cattle. Nothing would satisfy André and Magazine until we decided to go over there and see what we could do.

No day seemed too long for these two hunting boys. Their keenness never flagged. I suspect, too, that André was eagerly looking for an opportunity to bang off his precious rifle, which he treated

very much as a schoolboy treats a cap pistol. After packing up a few stores, and taking André and Magazine as hunters, and John to look after the camp, George and I left for the lion area early in the afternoon and chose a good, tree-shaded camping ground close to the lakeside.

Our plan of campaign was to shoot a couple of zebra, and to drag them about to make a good scent trail, eventually leaving them suitably placed close to a patch of bush, so that we could crawl up at the first glimmer of dawn in the hope of finding a lion feeding.

When you want a bait, it is always exceedingly difficult to obtain. Although the plains by the lakeside were usually flocked with any amount of zebra, this evening was an exception. It was almost dark before we could get what we wanted. After a lot of strenuous labour we managed to drag portions of our kills over the ground and tied them firmly up to trees with wire, close to a large area of bush. Both André and Magazine were firmly of the opinion that the lions would come for the bait.

Strangely enough it was not the thought of a lion that kept me awake that night. The moon was lighting up the still waters of the lake almost like daylight. The air was quite still and the silence broken only by the ping of mosquitoes and the swishing wingbeats of countless wild fowl as they flew overhead or along the shore. Listening more intently, the stealthy tread of buck and antelope could be heard as they grazed peaceably on the flat ground close to the camp, their forms often clearly silhouetted against the horizon.

As night drew on, suddenly a great splashing noise issued from the lake as if gigantic bodies were moving about. This was the correct solution,

for on slipping from under my mosquito net and crawling down to the shore I was just in time to see dozens of hippos of all sizes, placidly and clumsily splashing out of the shallows, to shake themselves free of the superfluous water and wander on to the grass and commence feeding. The moon glinting on their slimy bodies and white tusks made them look almost ghostlike. They were less than sixty yards from me as I lay prone on the ground watching them.

Before the first streaks of dawn had lit up the dark water of the lake, John had awakened us, with tea made over last night's rekindled fire. We were soon away. We each took a shot gun in addition to our rifles, for we had decided to shoot duck by the lakeside after we had visited the bait. A walk of something over a mile brought us to the place. As the saffron dawn lit the east we cast around a little, to be certain to be downwind—not that a lion on a kill worries much about scent, but a habit once learned in stalking is rarely forgotten.

Suddenly over the bush ahead a large column of smoke appeared. It could not be far from our kill. We looked at each other questioningly. It *was* smoke. André frowned and clucked his mouth, his favourite habit when disappointed. Still hunters, still wary, we crawled toward the bush, ready for any emergency. On rounding it, we came upon a most unexpected and exasperating sight. Sixty yards ahead of us, seated around a large fire, were some forty natives, talking and jabbering—cooking, and eating, our dead zebras! The funny side of it came to me; not so to André and Magazine. With snarls of rage they leapt towards this group like charging tigers, uttering the most terrible threats in their own language.

Taken by surprise, the mob jumped to their feet and began to throw spears at our two hunters. This was really too much. Both George and I were feeling very raw that our sport had been spoilt. We ran up to our boys, snatched our shot guns, fired four shots into the thick of the greedy marauders, who let out a mass yell, scattered like pheasants, and fled shrieking into the bush.

Suddenly taking heart at our encouraging salvo, André and Magazine followed, giving vent to blood-thirsty war cries. They went into the bush like terriers into a hayrick, and returned some minutes later, torn of clothing, but wreathed in smiles. Each was proudly leading a frightened captive.

"Would the Bwanas beat them?"

The Bwanas would, bearing in mind the spear-throwing, which might have had fatal results.

We gave them a thrashing they are not likely to forget, and went back to the camp for breakfast. We had failed in our lion shoot, but according to the boys, we had a good native hunt. André and Magazine never stopped laughing. They walked ahead, re-enacting the drubbing we had given their captives, chucking and dancing with glee.

How does news travel in Africa? It is as if the bush has some secret wireless unknown to the white mind. Less than six hours from the time of our adventure with the zebra eaters, and our return to camp, we found the Chief in fully parley-dress and half his villagers awaiting us.

They had heard something.

André and Magazine walked straight up, and were instantly surrounded by a clamouring, jabbering crowd. John, who belonged to a different tribe, stood apart in lone isolation. We settled ourselves in our chairs, rifles across our knees. This time Magazine took the lion's share of the

demonstration. André had had his chance a night or two before. We watched them do their double turn in an open space kept as clear as a boxing ring. They acted, talked and laughed, their every movement watched by the jury.

Both talking at once, the two of them reconstructed the whole adventure; the stalk, the smoke arising over the bush, the long creep up to the kill, the horror at seeing the crowd of natives, the spear-throwing (illustrated with surprising gusto), and the firing of the shot gun—at which the whole of the listeners turned and looked solemnly at us. Then came the chase after the fugitives, their capture and eventual beating. Each took a spectator for his victim, and drubbed him soundly. Thus our two sportsmen held their audience spellbound.

Suddenly there was a silence, and all eyes turned on us again, as we sat, much amused, smoking our pipes. A serious note was introduced, however, when the Chief approached and solemnly addressed me in a language I could not understand. I hailed John, and asked him what the old man was saying.

“Bwana,” he said, “the Chief says you have done very *badly*.”

This was the last straw. I was feeling annoyed that the lion hunt had been ruined. If the Chief was objecting to the beating of the two captives, despite the spear-throwing, we would most certainly beg to differ from him, in no uncertain fashion.

“Why the hell does the Chief think we have done badly?” I burst out. “Tell him that we never do badly.”

John began to smile. “Bwana,” he said, “the Chief thinks that after you had beaten them you

should have brought them to him, and he would have had them killed ! ”

It appeared that the marauders belonged to a rival and much hated tribe. Thus our friendship was cemented with Mweniwungu and his tribe. This also serves for an illustration that but for white rule in Africa the tribes would be at each other's throats again.

Alas, our time had come to an end, for my friend had to go back to his farm at Abercorn, and so we packed up our camp and prepared to depart. Such things as petrol tins, bottles and boxes and various stores which we did not require, were given to André and his friends—prized possessions in their eyes ; so much so that Wendapoli and two other boys started a fight as to who should get one box. And so, having said farewell to the Chief, we made our way back across the sandy Rukwa Basin and up the great escarpment to M'Beya, three thousand five hundred feet up, where we found it almost cold after the terrific heat of the Rift Valley.

CHAPTER XIV

Songwe Delta

WHEN we got back to M'Beya I thought it advisable to give the car what attention it might need. I found she needed little beyond tightening a few nuts all round, regreasing, and changing the oil. It is interesting to note that I had not had a puncture: reason, because I fitted extra thick tyres.

Rhodesian motorists usually suffer through the walls of their tyres being torn to shreds by the stubs of bush which protrude from the edges of the roads, which, as I explained previously, are merely scratched out of the wooded surface and are innocent of metalling.

I was all ready to leave for Iringa, two hundred miles north, when about five p.m. John announced that André had turned up. I was amazed.

This wonderfully keen sportsman had run the seventy miles from his village in under two days, and arrived virtually panting with news. He had found another herd of buffalo in the Songwe Delta. Would "the long hunter," as they had named me, come back and hunt?

The Long Hunter needed no second invitation. John, André—immensely pleased—and myself set off next morning at dawn. Bamboo swamps soon rendered the car useless, so we left it at a native village, crossed the Songwe River, and started a temporary camp on the rising ground on the other side.

The following dawn we were off again in a northerly direction across flats and bush until late in the afternoon we came to a small water hole, its muddy sides deeply indented with buffalo spoor. This was where André had spotted them three days before.

He was in the seventh heaven of delight having his beloved rifle again, and suggested that we should camp about a mile from this spot, and visit the water-hole, at dawn in case the animals were there.

That night I was quite unable to sleep. The cause was something more than the howling of hyenas, and the croaks. I seemed to be assailed by some ominous presentiment. In vain I tried to push it aside, but it remained. I was still tossing and turning as one does when sleep is elusive, when John brought a cup of tea at dawn, and announced that André was ready. As we had no extra hunting boys, we took two natives who had been acting as porters, and John, who was not particularly keen on hunting. I noticed he was very quiet as he walked along, flicking the long grass with the stick that he always carried. John was the nearest thing to a European valet that I ever struck—the perfect servant.

Our first sight of the water-hole was from about eighty yards across to the dense bamboos on the other side. The only animals near it were two reedbuck. It looked as if we had drawn a blank, but as we drew nearer, André began to bubble with joy, pointing excitedly at the ground ahead; there, deeply imprinted in the mud, were the fresh marks of buffalo. They had been obviously standing about in the water for some time and had just drawn off. The spoor led clearly across the rough grass towards the bamboos. André took up the trail like an eager bloodhound, swooping

and darting here and there, never still for an instant. The rest of us followed close behind. The going in the bamboo swamp was difficult. At intervals we came across enormous holes made by the feet of elephants and hippos, sunk deeply into the slush.

For about half an hour we followed the trail, as it twisted about in the squelching morass, until in front of us a few egrets suddenly fluttered above the tops of the bamboos. They settled again almost immediately; the buffalo must be just ahead.

We went on cautiously, lifting one foot and then the other out of the bog, making low sucking noises which were impossible to subdue.

The egrets had pitched close by, but we could not see anything through the densely packed bamboos. We stopped, knee deep in slush.

The suspense was maddening. My hunting instinct was provoked to fever pitch, my nerves overstrung, doubtless by those haunting premonitions of that sleepless night.

A slight noise came from just ahead, and then we could discern the slow swishing of a tail. I forced myself forward for a yard or two, and found we were within twenty yards of a big herd, heavily screened by bamboos. André was at my side. My main anxiety then was to prevent him banging off with my spare .375. Behind were John and the other two natives.

I shook a warning finger at André, and taking a sight on the dimly lighted outline of a large pair of horns, fired. The animal let out a strident cough, and we heard it plump down into the marsh. Then came that gargantuan massed snort of the other animals as they began their smashing rush through the bamboos.

But suddenly there was complete silence. I guessed what had happened. The herd had stopped and were listening intently for the enemy.

The buffalo is a past master at standing still in absolute silence. The grey-black colour of his body blends so completely with his surroundings that you can hardly see him. His breathing is regulated, and almost completely silenced.

How long that nerve-racking silence endured I cannot say. You don't think of time under circumstances like this! I noticed André biting his lips—and then there broke out a terrific smashing of bamboos. It got rapidly louder, until it seemed as if thousands of wooden packing cases were being battered to pieces.

The crashing noise came nearer, until the tips of the bamboos right in front of us were suddenly gapped by the frenzied advance. The buffalo were coming back in their tracks straight at us. The leader reached the spot where lay their dead comrade, and the whole herd stopped, facing us, plainly visible through the undergrowth. The air was full of their terse, strained breathing. Soon they began to snort defiantly and stamp their feet in the mud with nervous impatience.

The situation looked more than dangerous! You can never anticipate what a buffalo will do. I looked at André. His set face showed plainly that he did not like the look of things. He was gripping his precious rifle as if he were about to set off on a bayonet charge; his complexion seemed almost grey.

In front of us a broken line of great horns glimmered in the half light. They were so close to one another that they appeared to be almost locked together. I didn't know what to do! If they stampeded towards us, it was all up. We

could not have moved an inch in the slush. So I decided to take a gamble on the lone chance.

I picked out the most visible head and fired. Bang! Bang! This was André's rifle, but whereas mine had brought down one animal, his bullet had yoomed through the bamboo tips.

The herd went mad again. Unable to move a yard, we had to stay listening to this typhoon of flesh and bones milling round in circles, snorting and bellowing. I knew they might charge us at any moment; André knew it too. He was licking his lips and pointing his rifle at the stampede.

Behind him I caught a glimpse of John. Not by any means a hunter, he was a brave man. He stood quite still, listening to that thunderous pandemonium, gripping his stick tightly in his hand. He knew! So did the other two native boys. With something approaching horror, I realised they were terrified. One of them started to edge away from us down the game trail, despite André's sudden and angry gesticulation.

The slightest noise would give our position away to the herd. The crashing ceased suddenly, to be followed by an ominous silence that grated terribly on my tautened nerves. My throat was dry. I found I was licking my lips.

The animals began to sniff again, and all at once there was a shriek of terror from behind. One of the native boys had bolted. The other followed him, leaving André, John and myself held fast in a swamp facing thirty or forty enraged buffalo.

Whether the wind shifted or whether the animals heard the two boys will always remain a mystery to me, but the beasts wheeled and charged after the miserable fugitives. We could not see them, but the direction of the noise and the egrets,

and the sight of the tops of the bamboos being smashed down showed us their progress. It looked as if they were for it—without the slightest hope of escape.

André and I extricated our feet from the quagmire, and struggled off down the trail as fast as the deep, viscous mud allowed. We could not hear ourselves speak because of the terrific smashing of undergrowth. But suddenly, above the noise of the stampede, we heard the most heartbreaking scream of pain and terror. We pushed on with frantic haste, and burst through the bamboos into a clearing made by the herd, to see an unforgettable scene.

Their great heads locked horn to horn, their frothing nostrils giving out hollow snorts, the great brutes were milling round and round in the mud. And underneath those champing hoofs were our two foolhardy boys, screaming piteously.

I felt sick at heart at this shocking sight, of these beasts venting their massed wrath on these two foolish natives.

The buffalo herd had caught the boys on the trail. Now, with their heads to the centre, the animals were milling round and round like a giant catherine wheel, their hindquarters threshing out a circle in the surrounding undergrowth. I had a vision of an agonized black face, an arm suddenly smashed to pulp.

With some vain hope of rescue, I sat down in the mud and fired as fast as I could into the centre of the herd. This was no time for the rules of hunting. For a good minute I blazed away. Beside me was André, shooting wildly into the bamboos but as brave as they make 'em.

I remember seeing two animals fall, and a body flung out of the edge of the catherine wheel;

then the terrifying sight of the animals as they formed into a phalanx and came for us! I fired two more lightning shots into the mass of bodies heading straight at us. An explosion from André's gun dangerously near my ear deafened me; his shout of warning came as if from some indistinct distance; enormous black bodies suddenly blotted out the light from my foresight. The crashing swamped my senses. Instinctively I threw myself flat in the mud and the herd swept over me.

A terrific jar, and then no more.

I awoke with a throbbing head, to find André and John bending anxiously over me. They thought I was dead.

I tried to move and found I was deeply embedded in the mud. There was an excruciating pain in my right shoulder. I had no alternative but to lie still while these two boys very carefully dug the mud away all round me. They moved me at last with the gentleness of trained nurses.

My right shoulder was very painful, and was quite useless. I feared it was broken, but after feeling it very painfully with my left hand I decided that it was dislocated. One of the animals had probably trodden on me as they rushed over.

Now, fully conscious, I gazed around. Close by was what appeared to be a veritable shambles. A dead cow buffalo lay a few yards away. Just beyond, two more. Half buried beneath one of the carcasses was the body of a native, quite still. Close to, screaming and yelling piteously, was the other boy. André and John half carried me over to the battlefield. One boy was quite dead. He had been completely crushed and flattened out, and almost buried in the mud by the infuriated herd. The other boy had had a miraculous escape.

He was merely shaken and bruised, and very frightened. The disgusted John silenced his screaming by giving him a wallop across the back with his stick.

I realised then that we were in a bad way. I had a dislocated shoulder and was badly cut and bruised, and could hardly walk—and we were in a swamp, miles from anywhere. Clouds of small mosquitoes were biting me to distraction. One boy was dead and the other was hysterical. I was nearly prostrate with pain, when André took charge of the situation. Telling John to stay and look after me, he set off to run back to the village, driving the frightened boy in front of him like a sheep.

I shall never forget the long wait in that mosquito-infested swamp; the heat of the blazing sun, and the pain in my shoulder. Minutes are dreary hours under such conditions. Even John was nearly driven to madness by the mosquitoes, as he faithfully tried to keep them off me with an improvised fan made of reeds. To ease my fretted nerves I asked him what had happened. For the first time that day his serious face lit into a great smile.

“Bwana, you have done well, five buffalo dead, good!”

“But a boy is dead!” I said.

“Bah! the dead boy,” he replied scornfully, “he deserved to die—not a brave boy like André and me—who, like the Bwana, are not frightened of buffalo.”

I smiled inwardly at his bravado, so unconsciously common with many natives, but it is understandable. They felt that they had not let their white master down, and were immensely proud of it. This feat would put them high up

in the estimation of their fellows. Now they were "big men" and heroes—as indeed they were.

My secret amusement at John's childlike disavowal of fear almost banished the pain in my shoulder. Personally I can think of nothing more terrifying than to be charged by a herd of buffalo with no possible escape. I had been badly scared myself. According to John, my last shot had killed the cow when close to me. André and he had immediately dashed into the bamboos at the side, and had just missed being trampled on by that mad rush of the herd which passed over me and crashed away into the jungle.

But I began to worry over this poor dead boy, and began to question John more closely on the tragedy. He treated the whole matter with intense scorn. I realised then more forcibly than ever before that life and death mean little to a native.

"But, Bwana, the boy was a coward, and so better dead," John would say. Seeing I looked worried about it still, he went on: "Oh, Bwana, the Chief will not mind. He will be delighted. Were there not five dead buffalo?"

He further assured me that the dead boy's wives would not mind; they soon would find other husbands. In fact, everybody would be pleased.

Having answered my questions to the satisfaction of his loyal and simple soul, he dismissed the whole thing from his mind as if it were an everyday happening.

After what seemed to be a most painful eternity of three hours, during most of which I was semi-conscious, a string of natives carrying knives and spears appeared, led by André, who still drove the wretched fugitive before him. André introduced a middle-aged man, wrapped in a dirty cotton cloth

and with an even dirtier headdress. He was the Chief.

Through John's interpretation I said I was sorry about the dead boy, but the old fellow evinced the same scorn for him as did John.

"Hapana (No), Bwana, it does not matter. The boy was a mwoga (coward), and better dead. Nyati Tano (five buffalo) have been shot and there is much nyama (meat); it is a great day, Bwana Kubwa (Great Bwana)."

I noticed not one of the score of natives who had arrived paid the slightest attention to the dead boy. Instead, they gathered round the dead animals, prodding them with their spears, talking and laughing. What was to me tragedy was being turned into comedy and rejoicing.

By this time, faint and sick with pain, and almost mad with mosquito bites, I was becoming anxious as to what was to happen to me. Then I noticed that some of the boys were making a stretcher out of bamboo poles and reeds. John told me that I was to be carried back to the village, and that the Chief would spare no efforts in looking after me. And so I left. To this day, I never knew what happened to the dead boy. It seemed to be the best policy not to enquire. Probably the vultures had a meal.

Late in the afternoon, after a long, infinitely wearisome journey in the stretcher, carried by four boys, I found myself at the village. All this time, walking alongside me, as if sole guardian of his master's fate, walked the faithful John. He seemed to hold himself more erect than usual. I knew he was feeling that he and André were the big people of this party. They both of them seemed to treat the others, even the Chief, as if they were most inferior. Were they not the

principal actors in this drama? It amused me to see them marching along, visibly puffed up with importance.

Directly we arrived at the camp, the women were immediately turned out, like so many cattle, with much holloaing, and set to build a hut for me. By sundown a very good one had been constructed of poles, well thatched and lined with grass. André and John had directed operations with the eyes of imperious martinets. It was obvious that the whole tribe recognised now what big heroes they were.

André designed a wonderful bed. Four short poles were stuck in holes in the ground. These were braced together by four cross pieces bound to the uprights with bark, and then the top was cleverly and thickly woven with rushes and grass. More grass provided a mattress. The pain in my shoulder was becoming terribly severe, so I determined to try and get it into joint again, but I had not the faintest idea how to do it. Eventually, with the wondering natives looking on, I had myself moved into a sitting position, forced the bad shoulder against the trunk of a tree, and told John to shove as hard as he could just below the collarbone.

The faithful boy did not demur even at having to turn his hand to osteopathy. He made several clumsy and exceedingly painful attempts to do what I wanted, and just when I had almost given up in agonized despair, there was a pronounced click, and to my infinite joy my shoulder went in—right in, too.

The shock of this improvised treatment made me feel suddenly very sick. I must have staggered and fainted. I remember coming to again, with John and André hovering over me like a pair of

anxious hens, and seemingly surrounded by the whole village pressing in at a respectful distance.

It was then I noticed that I was being attended to by a really handsome native woman. Tall, almost aristocratic-looking, she had such a presence that she looked a lady compared with the other natives. She was taller, cleaner and neater than any of the others. I asked John who she was, and André shyly introduced me to his wife, whom he had brought to look after me.

"Mrs." André was soon to show me that she was a fitting mate for this clean, good-natured boy to whom I had become very much attached. Unlike the other native women, she always kept herself completely covered with clean, white fabric. During the week which followed, as I lay in bed with the shoulder exceedingly painful, I became accustomed to her bright face smiling respectfully as she busied herself cleaning the hut and doing my washing—a remarkable wife of a remarkable native.

The van was miles away—but not too far for John, the handy man. One day he set off with three natives, and later I heard the welcome noise of the engine. The gallant fellow, with his grinning companions, having the time of their lives, had actually brought it over the very country which I had decided was impossible. I was glad to be able to treat my sundry small cuts with peroxide from the first-aid kit, and after making these first efforts, I found I was far weaker than I imagined.

Days slipped by. Happily fever did not manifest itself. The cure was a matter of lying still to allow the body to put itself right.

Every day, and often many times a day, the old Chief would come to enquire how I was. Day and

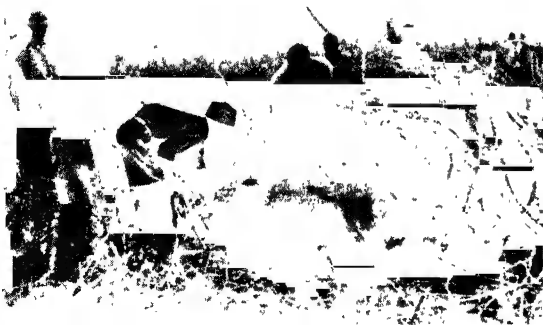


*Where game feeds
at night*

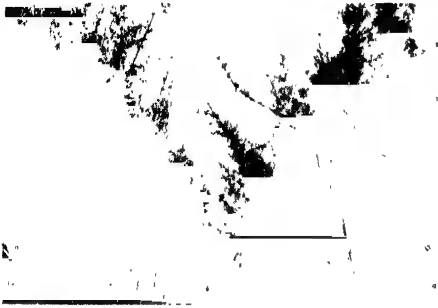
Open flats



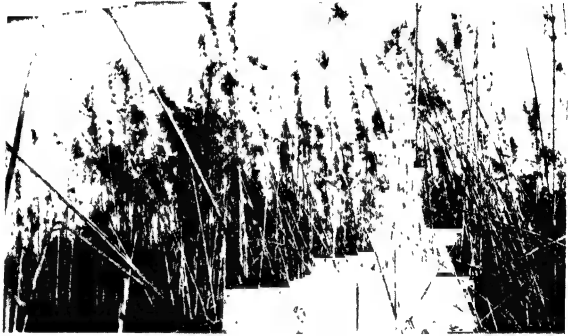
*André spooring in
dense bamboo.*



*After a kill :
Natives arriving to
cut up dead buffalo*



*Types of
Bamboo*



Bamboo



*Meat for camp
Wildebeest*



*The bravest and best native
hunter I ever met—André*

night I was attended by John and André—neither of them ever left me. The days were long and weary, and the nights mere snatching of fitful, restless sleep, broken by the howls of hyenas and jackals, and the torment of the untiring mosquitoes. The natives and their wives would furtively, but politely, glance in my direction as they passed to or from their daily occupations, and on all sides I had examples of the friendliness and kindness of these simple black folk.

I had no idea how long it took a dislocated shoulder to mend. It was still very bruised and painful, but as I could not stay here for ever, I told John that the following morning we would try and get back to M'Beya.

Poor old André! The news of our impending departure plunged him into a state of grief that was poignant to behold. I think he had come to regard our stay as a permanency, and that when I was well he and I would go on hunting indefinitely.

I felt I would like to do something to repay these people for their amazing kindness, but I had very little to offer.

When the old Chief paid his last ceremonial call, I presented him with an old coat and some handkerchiefs, which delighted him so much that he began to dance with glee. To the village I gave the rest of my stores. "Mrs." André was enraptured with a spare shirt.

I felt that parting with my brave friend and co-hunter, Andre, would be difficult. There was between us a bond difficult to fathom, but surely made up of a common interest and nurtured by our having faced the gravest danger together.

He came to me that last time solemn-faced and miserable. As presents, I gave him my hunting

knife and a snapshot of myself. Immediately he was wreathed in smiles. He had never seen such a wonder as a photograph before. He looked at it, and then at me, called his wife, who instantly grasped what it was, and both of them began to smile and chuckle like delighted children. I could not have given a greater treasure. I only hope that after I had gone the Chief did not impound the treasure by exercising his right of chieftainship. Once André had told me, with a great show of remorse, how a very distinguished and royal hunter had written him a letter, which had instantly been claimed by the Chief.

So we said good-bye, and went back to M'Beya, and with the immaculate John bumping on the seat beside me, I pushed on to Iringa.

CHAPTER XV

Tanganyika Territory

FROM M'Beya the way crosses the high Livingstone Mountain Range, which divides the Great Rift Valley from Lake Nyassa, a hundred miles to the south.

With John driving, we climbed forty miles over great escarpments, up and down steep gradients, twisting and twirling round hairpin bends, the road winding and unwinding like a great snake, with no apparent motive or reason, until I began to wonder if it would ever emerge from this highland maze. I am afraid I could not enjoy the scenery. John's well-intentioned driving was exceedingly native, and every one of a legion of bumps disturbed my very painful shoulder.

After about forty miles, with more thrills than I managed to keep out of a thousand, I took the wheel. The road had straightened out a little and was dropping quickly. Thirty miles later it emerged into a vast undulating plateau.

From Figula, it wandered for twenty-five miles through rock strewn and bush covered mountains, and then descended into the Ruhaha Valley, and finally crossed the river, ascending the steep escarpment at the top of which is Iringa, lying on a plateau, overlooking vast mountain ranges.

Here I got a real insight into the Indian invasion, pushing its way towards the interior from the sea ; for nearly all the stores are Indian, and the streets are full of turbaned men and

brilliantly clad women, a singular contrast to the more sombre native.

The Indians here are rich, owning the transport services, some of the garages, and even one of the hotels. Although owned by an Indian, this hotel was managed by a European.

Dadoma, an unsightly town of tin-topped huts situated in a dusty plain, appears to be full of Indians and Arabs. Here we crossed the Dar es Salaam-Kigoma Railway, having successfully covered the twelve hundred miles separating the railway systems between Broken Hill and Dadoma.

At five o'clock, after a hundred and four more miles, during which I again sat through John's idea of driving, we reached Kondoa-Irangi. This tiny spot had no place where we could stay. We either had to camp, or push on to Babati, seventy-two miles away.

When you are driving a car across a vast continent, there is a perpetual urge to keep pushing on, however tired you feel, so we decided to make for Babati. It would have been wiser to have waited until next morning, as we only saw a portion of what I am told is remarkable scenery.

The run provided one excitement. The headlights of the car suddenly lit up the form of a lioness. She stood there perfectly still, looking straight at us. I stopped, and so we stayed regarding each other for several minutes, until she majestically stalked into the bush. Not for all the gold in Africa would I have shot her.

It is one thing to stalk and spoor lions or buffalo on foot, where each side has a chance, but it is a very different matter from murdering animals out of a car.

We arrived at Babati, an isolated cluster of houses, very tired, having done three hundred and

fifty miles during the day. I got a good bed at the only inn, waking early to gasp with astonishment at the majesty of Mount Ufume, towering its cloud-capped head eight thousand five hundred feet over the most perfect scenery, and pushed on towards Kenya.

Coming round a spur of Mount Ufume, we came upon what must be one of the most amazing sights in Africa. Thousands of feet beneath us a plain of incredulous size, timbered with mimosa and baobab trees, slipped away into the distance. To the left, the plain was suddenly sheered by a precipitous wall of bluish rock, rising some two thousand feet and sweeping out of sight—the beginning of the great Rift Wall, which runs two thousand miles along the side of the Great Rift Valley.

From here the land became more stony and undulating, until suddenly, over a rise, the great giant extinct volcano Meru raised its peak fourteen thousand five hundred feet into the clouds. At its foot in the great plain are many smaller hillocks. Compared with the mountain they look like ant heaps, though in reality they are many hundreds of feet high. They might be almost a bodyguard of sentries, guarding this king of mountains.

At Arusha, a popular jumping-off place for safari, is the famous Serengeti Plain, which probably contains more lions than any other place in Africa. I enquired about the condition of the road to Nairobi. The answer was characteristic of the many who live in Africa: "Oh, it's quite alright."

Still trusting, and anxious to get to Kenya before the rains, I pushed on, to encounter—and at night—the very worst part of the great north road between the Cape and Nairobi.

It was the worst drive I have ever experienced, over a really terrible track, sometimes deep in sand or dust, pockmarked with innumerable pot-holes, and broken by very steep dongas. How many times we stuck I have forgotten. Twice the car nearly capsized on the edges of the dongas.

Seven and a half hours later, after having passed the Kenya customs barrier at Longido, we reached the rest huts at Namanga. I was dead beat, and for the first time on the journey, in really low spirits, after the fearful, nerve-racking, battering drive. It is to the everlasting credit of this car that it never flinched once, and that no springs were broken.

CHAPTER XVI

Nairobi

WE got into Nairobi about the middle of November, having covered eleven thousand eight hundred and fifty-one miles. I had used five hundred and sixty-three gallons of petrol, which worked out at just about twenty-one miles to the gallon. Pretty good, you'll admit, when a great deal of the journey had been done in first gear. The five hundred and sixty-three gallons had cost seventy-eight pounds, which worked out at just under three shillings per gallon.

I had drained the crank case religiously every thousand miles, and having refilled it, I found there was no need to add any more oil until I refilled it again. The spares I had so earnestly collected at Capetown were still packed in their boxes. As a motorist I was feeling inordinately proud, as I swung into the pleasant streets of what appealed to me immediately as the most European town in Africa.

Like all new towns, Nairobi is not pretty. My early impressions were of fine, wide streets, brightly attractive shops, hotels, and endless squads of motor cars.

It soon showed itself a place of many contrasts, a veritable kaleidoscope of types. Well-dressed tourists, big game hunters, professional men, settlers and farmers—in for business and amusement—wearing bush shirts with shorts or corduroy trousers, shading their bronzed, hardy faces beneath

wide-brimmed hats. Well-bred women, good-looking far above the average, illustrate their class and taste by their neat, stylish dress, some wearing ordinary clothes, others clad in the more picturesque fashion of rancher girls of the far west.

Here indeed is Hollywood, without Hollywood's garish vulgarity. I found it a joyous experience after months of trailing through the bush country, to sit in the lounge of an hotel, gazing at an attractive young woman in neat khaki riding breeches. An orange jumper moulded itself attractively over her neat figure encircled by a serviceable leather belt. Her complexion, tanned to a faint golden-brown, contrasted charmingly with the vivid green scarf, and her large wide-brimmed hat added a note of romantic piquancy to an altogether fascinating outfit.

My wondering eyes began to stray round. There were girls everywhere. Girls in green jumpers, red shirts, open-collared and short-sleeved, to reveal healthy, bronzed arms; young men in hunting kit, a little too immaculate perhaps, with dangerous looking hunting knives tucked in their belts.

Outside in the wonderful sunshine, intermingling with the white population and outnumbering them several times, were the Indians, some in gay fez, some in turbans, accompanied by their graceful, brightly-clad women folk. And then, in simple yet pleasing contrast, coffee-coloured Kikuyu women, skin-clad, with bangles in their ears and rings round their necks and shins, shuffling along bare-footed and knock-kneed, bent forward under the heavy loads on their shoulders, which they support by straps round their heads.

There were the bare-footed Masai, half-naked, romantic and wild-looking, reminiscent of the turbulent race from which they sprang; swagger-

ing indolently by, airing their weirdly dressed, red-ochred hair and carrying barbaric looking spears. Native servants, usually wearing white shorts and shirts, comprise Somalis, Kavirondos, Ukambas, and heaven knows who else. They, and an occasional typical Englishman, combine to make the streets a pleasing mixture of staggering contrast.

On arriving, I followed my usual custom on entering any town, and went into Barclay's Bank. No bank in Africa does so much for its clients. The managers were both members of the Nairobi Club, where they suggested I should stay. I went straight there, and found it situated on high ground just outside the western outskirts of the town, looking out on to a fine cricket ground, bordered by gum and jacaranda trees.

Heath, the assistant secretary, took me a tour of the surroundings in his car. The residential parts are on the high ground to the west of the town, and again on the eastern side at Muthaiga. The gardens, recently freshened by rain, were lovely, full of bright coloured flowers growing in rich brown soil. Everything was green. What a contrast to the arid brownness of the thousands of miles of country through which I had just come. The tall jacaranda trees were heavy with light blue blossom, scarlet poinsettias and the many-coloured bougainvilleas were in full bloom. Hibiscus hedges and flowering creepers added their lustre to this riot of brightness.

Though built to suit African conditions, the houses are thoroughly British. Golf courses, cricket, hockey, football and polo grounds, tennis courts, swimming baths and race courses, run in the very best traditions of everything that is good at home, are in and all around the town.

At sundown time in the club I found myself talking fishing with a couple of keen fishermen. We discussed our pet subject over innumerable whiskeys. When I went to bed my brain was a whirl of thoughts. Trout, big game, pretty girls, bad roads, gorgeous flowers, natives, Indians, and a million other things. How different from some of those nights I had spent in the wild—but I still wanted more of them.

The next morning I found out from the Shell people, and from the local Automobile Association, that there was no hope of attempting the journey along the Nile until the end of January, owing to the universally flooded state of the country. So I made up my mind to stay in Kenya until then. During the next week I learnt some astonishing things about Nairobi.

The first was that it is all bunk about its being impossible to live in this charming town unless you have limitless funds. I was living at the club most comfortably at eighteen pounds a month.

Many highly-coloured stories have been circulated about the sundowner custom, and the wild night life of Kenya. World-echoing whispers have been spread about the habits of some of its inhabitants. Well—there are heavy drinkers in Kenya as there are everywhere else. Perhaps some drink more in Kenya than they would at home, but after several months' experience of this beautiful colony, I say without the slightest hesitation that there is no more drinking here than there is in any other part of the British Empire—and a good deal less than in some. And I am not asking you to guess these latter.

As regards the stories of the wild night life, these are quite untrue and unfair to Kenya. The majority of the settlers are quiet, hard-working

people, who have made Kenya their home, and run their establishments with the same dignity that they would in England. There *are* parties in the country, and in Nairobi, of course—happy parties, full of enjoyment—for in Kenya it is almost impossible to be sad. At some of these parties men and women may become a little wild, but the same happens the world over.

It has been said that many women lose their heads in Kenya. No doubt some have, others do, and more will. Women being human, and men too, are apt occasionally to lose their heads anywhere. No doubt some people have been flighty on Margate Beach or Brighton Pier—or even in the remote solitude of a quiet English village; such things have even happened on the deck of a liner under the Southern Cross. It has come to my ears that one or two people have been known to overshoot the mark in London. Yet these happenings receive not one iota of the publicity given to them in Kenya.

Here then is the "sad" truth for the sensation mongers. The majority of the people in Kenya have minds, manners and customs certainly equal in propriety and decency to those met with anywhere else in the Empire. There is no equivalent of either Mrs. Meyrick or Texas Guinan in Kenya? I know—because I looked.

Kenya has already become a country of permanent residence, with Nairobi as its centre, official, commercial and social. As the years pass, the institutions and traditions of English civilisation will be built up by those saner elements of its life which are there now, though perhaps not very self-advertising.

It has been correctly termed a public school colony, a very large proportion of the settlers

being the sons and daughters of well known and distinguished families from home.

At the moment Kenya is under the control of the Colonial Office. She has her Legislative Council, with members elected by the settlers, but these members are out-numbered and out-voted by the official Government majority. In few colonies can there have been such political unrest or feeling between the settlers on the one side and the Government officials on the other.

A great deal of sympathy is due to the settler, who probably has spent most of his life, and most of his money, in opening up and cultivating the country, only to find he has to obey annoying rules and pay irksome taxes, instituted by a gang of officials sent from England by a Colonial Office that knows the minimum about local conditions. The official is not personally disliked; it is the system that is objected to. One can readily understand that the settler dislikes being governed by a body of men who, taken as a whole, are not superior to himself, either socially or educationally.

The relations of the Colonial Office and Kenya are literally bristling with cases of gross stupidity. For instance, several years ago it was decreed that the Highlands of Kenya, then inhabited by Europeans, were to be dominated by Indians, who were to be given equal rights with whites. The local legislature was swamped, and it was only after determined resistance of the settlers that the Home Government eventually gave way. Secret meetings were held over all the country, and the settlers banded themselves together in a solid and praiseworthy determination to resist, either passively or actively, the imposition of this most unpopular and unfair proposal. The Home Government climbed down, and so probably saved

itself the indignity of seeing most of its District Commissioners, and perhaps even the Governor himself, kidnapped and held in friendly custody.

Quite recently there has been another first-class scare, which drove to fever pitch the indignation of nearly every white inhabitant in the colony. Kenya had an unbalanced budget of about £250,000. The Colonial Office immediately ordered that an Income Tax should be levied. On paper at home, and to those who knew nothing about local conditions, this may have looked all right. As it happens it would have proved most unfair. The people of Kenya rose *en bloc* in rightful protest—for the following reasons:

Indians do practically the whole of the native trade, and an appreciable amount of other trade as well. Probably ninety per cent. of the wages received by the natives is paid by Europeans. This money is spent with the Indians, who, instead of using it for trade in Kenya, send it back to India. Kenya is accordingly drained of this money. It is also extremely doubtful whether the Indians keep accurate books.

It is therefore obvious to everyone that the white inhabitant would have to shoulder by himself the burden of income tax, while the Indian escaped almost free.

Ignoring the initial storm that was raised, the Home Government hired a block of buildings in Nairobi, and sent out from England a high salaried income tax official to institute a start. To add insult to injury, the official's salary and the rent of these palatial buildings were to be paid by the unfortunate Kenya taxpayers, who soon got busy.

The country bubbled with mass meetings. Innumerable petitions were signed, and nearly every inhabitant subscribed his signature. The bulky

petition, containing thousands of names, was taken home by air—at considerable inconvenience to himself—by one of Kenya's most distinguished and courtly gentlemen, who presented it to the Colonial Office. The result was that the income tax proposal was rescinded, and Kenya is now allowed to balance her own budget in a manner that should prove fair to everyone. The emissary who took this petition home has done many good things for his colony, but Kenya will always feel in debt to him for the tact and firmness with which he handled this matter.

From a colonizing point of view Kenya is probably unrivalled in Africa. Now she is going through a period of transition. When the depression is lifted from the world, and confidence returns, she will go ahead still further.

CHAPTER XVII

Kenya

I WAS not to be allowed to forget that I was a traveller. One morning I came to the sudden realisation that my legs and arms were a mass of sores.

While hunting in the bamboo swamps and the rush-covered flats of Rukwa, my bare legs had been constantly cut and scratched, and I had been literally peppered with mosquito bites. With the cheery optimism, or rather the insensate folly of a novice, I had paid no attention to these things, with the result that they had begun to fester.

This morning in particular I seemed to be all swellings and pains, so, having to take some films to the chemist, I casually asked the assistant if he had any ointment with which I could dress these places. He nearly collapsed when I rolled up my trousers and showed him my legs, and immediately hurried me off to a doctor, who proved to be a charming young Irishman.

He examined me, and soon led me to realise that I was the worst kind of lunatic.

"You've got the most poisonous veldt sores I have ever seen," he said, as gravely as an Irishman can. "I think I may be able to save you from blood-poisoning, but you look like a certainty for fever."

With that cheering news, he packed me off to a nursing home.

Much annoyed, but impressed by his warning,

I went off and stayed four or five days at the Maia Carberry Nursing Home, named after that gallant Kenya airwoman killed in an aeroplane crash. I refused to get blood-poisoning or fever!

When I came out I went off for a week's fishing. George Finlayson took me to Gilgil, to fish for trout in the Marindot River, a tributary of the Melawa, some eighty miles from Nairobi. The road climbs all the way for thirty miles to the Limuru escarpment. The view from the top over the great Rift Valley is one of the most wonderful in Africa.

The first day we caught twenty-three fish, the biggest over four pounds in weight, and nothing under one pound. Our casts were broken on several occasions, for these fish are magnificent fighters.

We had many days equally good. The river runs in a rocky gorge, between bush-covered mountains. The banks are heavily overhung with trees, and in many places flowers and vegetation grow head high in dense profusion. At the moment it is only possible to gain access to the river in certain spots, and even then one has to be no mean athlete. Patience is required at times in pushing one's rod through the undergrowth. In time these banks will be cleared.

There is every class of water—running streams, slow-moving stretches, waterfalls, and deep, silent pools.

The fish will readily take a fly — butchers, alexandras and teals being the favourites.

The cost of fishing here is twenty-five shillings a year, and there is over twenty miles of fishing. The record fish caught so far is twelve pounds in weight, and many have been caught weighing between five and nine pounds. Compare the price

of this river to that of an English one. If in England, the Marindot would let at certainly one hundred and fifty pounds a mile. It is literally full of magnificent rainbow trout.

Lake Naivasha, fifteen miles long and a few miles wide, is the home of many wild fowl. A few years ago it was stocked with black bass. These have now grown into a weight of five pounds, and will undoubtedly increase in size. They offer excellent sport and can be caught with a fly or a spinner. In addition to these there are the talapia, which provide excellent amusement and make good eating.

We enjoyed several days' fishing on this lake, and bags of over twenty fish were generally obtained. The most "hard-to-please" angler will find all the fishing he requires in this district.

Another good fishing spot is round Nyeri, underneath the slopes of the glacier-topped Mount Kenya, a hundred miles to the north of Nairobi.

The trout fishing in Kenya is very good indeed, and deserves far more publicity than it gets. Many of the rivers have been stocked with rainbow and brown trout, which have thrived exceedingly well, particularly the former. They appear to spawn all the year round, and increase very rapidly in numbers. They also grow very quickly in size. In some places the numbers have become so great that the danger is that the rivers are under-fished rather than the reverse.

The cost is absurdly low. The rental of a really good salmon river in Scotland, or a first-class stretch of an English trout stream costs several hundred pounds for two or three months. In addition to this there is a fairly hefty hotel bill. Whether you get fish or not depends entirely on the state of the water.

You can fly to Kenya in seven days for an

inclusive charge of one hundred and nine pounds. The return fare is under two hundred pounds. A hotel in Kenya costs fifteen pounds a month. Your safari expenses are what you like to make them; mine cost me very little, certainly not twenty-five pounds a month. As certain as the sun will rise, you will catch any amount of fish, and big ones too. If you like shooting, you will find some of the best obtainable.

Personally, I would rather fish and shoot in Africa than anywhere in the United Kingdom; and I have experience of both these sports in the latter country.

Kenya has been regarded as a rich man's playground, and there is an impression that everything must be expensive. This is understandable, because of the many expensive safaris fitted out for rich Americans, Britishers, Indian Princes and Film Companies. Comfort and often publicity are the first consideration, with sport a good second.

There is one house on the outskirts of Nairobi that one approaches by a long, uphill drive, bordered on one side by blue gums and many flowering shrubs. Approaching it, one notices a stream, cleverly dammed up in parts to make lovely water gardens. On the other side of the drive is a magnificent herbaceous border, rioting with colour. Beyond, a large lawn, beautifully green since the rain, studded with dignified and lovely trees.

The house, of bungalow type, covered with flowering creepers, which stands at the top, belongs to Lady MacMillan.

I do not suppose that during the last quarter of a century anyone has done more for Kenya

or is more widely known than this very great lady. She has interested herself in practically everything in the Colony.

Despite the fact that she is at an age when most other people would be inclined to sit back and feel they had done their bit, Lady MacMillan still carries on with the same boundless energy for which she has always been famous. There are few Lady MacMillans in the world, let alone in Kenya.

I stayed ten days in this lovely house, and met many charming, well-known and interesting people. Lord Francis Scott, head of the Council, wise, polite and courteous, who took no small part in persuading the Home Government to drop the Income Tax Bill; Piers Mostyn, the young adventurous settler from up country, a brilliant though most unadvertising air pilot; Murray Hughes, the clever geologist; Sir Joseph Sheridan, the very Irish Lord Chief Justice of Tanganyika and his charming wife, full of wit and personality, are but a few of the many interesting personalities. Finally, there was that grand old man, Mr. Charles Bulpett. If ever Kenya required an advertisement for a health resort, here it is. When I first met him I judged him to be about sixty. He told me he was over eighty. A great athlete in his youth, he has been out here for many years, after leading an adventurous and interesting life. Now he is as active and full of personality as many men far his junior in years.

Nairobi aerodrome provided me with a great thrill. Come with me and have a peep at it.

The aerodrome is a few miles south of the town, on a vast plain—which is all game reserve. One Sunday we went to see the England-bound aeroplane off. We drove towards the aerodrome

in the first grey light of dawn, passing many zebra, wildebeest, hartebeest, quietly grazing close to the road. They took no more notice of us than if they were cattle.

One or two cars were already there when we arrived, and just ahead of us, silhouetted against the pale sky, was the dark mass of the aeroplane with the mechanics making their final inspection. Other cars continued to arrive at close intervals, and disgorged men and women in all sorts of raiment; late birds in evening dress, come on from a dance; others in the kit in which they had probably been working during night shift, waiters, coffee-stall hands; friends of passengers, reporters and Indians. There must have been a hundred, all told.

Finally two big cars arrive. From them alight the passengers, clad in the same tweed suits or dresses that one would expect to see in England. And all the time the Eastern sky reddens steadily, the dark hills in the distance become more blue, and the dew on the grass begins to silver in the early light.

Then suddenly the great orb of the sun appears, and drives away the stars. The light discloses any amount of antelope and buck grazing on the aerodrome. The passengers get into the 'plane just as if they were entering a less romantic railway train; the suit cases and mail are being put aboard.

The noise of the great engine breaks the quiet stillness of the dawn; the force of the exhaust driving up a miniature dust storm. The pilot and the wireless operator take their seats, the doors are shut. Mechanics take the chocks away from the front of the wheels, while in the centre of the aerodrome others have shooed away the

buck and antelope ; the machine, her engines roaring and darting blue flame from their exhausts, taxis away and leaps into the air.

Seven days away from England ! I could not suppress the feeling of wanting to be in her. As she circled round the aerodrome I stood remote from the chattering sightseers, feeling a lone, rather homesick traveller.

Soon I began to feel proud of this British machine, flying between the Motherland and the outposts of the Empire. It is surely written large on the skies of progress that the aeroplane may be not only the salvation of the present Africa, but the creator of a new Africa. It is the conqueror of distance, impervious as it is to the effects of rough roads, floods and mountains.

CHAPTER XVIII

Hell's Gate

DURING my stay in Kenya I had made friends with an energetic coffee farmer, who was also a very keen hunter. We made arrangements to go on safari together. He owned a useful lorry, into which we packed stores and water. I took my van, which carried the bedding and other material.

His wife came with us, and very ably ran the commissariat of the camp. My John, and three boys from his farm completed the party.

We camped beyond the Longenot escarpment, some sixty miles from Nairobi. Two miles to the north of us scrub covered mountains, deeply gnarled by volcanic action and erosion, rise precipitously. A narrow deep gorge cuts through this ridge, with heavily overgrown sides rising hundreds of feet.

It is aptly named Hell's Gate. Here during the day live buffalo and rhino, lions and leopards, truly a frightening country for the unskilled and the unwary.

In my opinion the greatest sport in Africa is the hunting of dangerous game. The factor of uncertainty makes real sport. The different situations which suddenly arise and have to be dealt with instantly, make the hunting of lions, elephants and buffalo so enormously thrilling.

There is no pleasure in shooting antelope and the rest unless one is collecting specimen heads, and sometimes it is a necessary task.

What a thrill to be on safari again ! We talked and yarned as only those who have experienced such life can appreciate, as we dined in the light of a hurricane lamp suspended over the rough table.

Afterwards we discussed shooting arrangements. My friend was a married man with children. He was quite frank—he was not too keen on buffalo, but preferred lions. I don't blame him.

Equally frankly there was nothing for me but my old friend Nyati.

The more I see of dangerous game shooting, the more I would rather shoot alone. There is no temptation to talk, one's observation is much keener ; and there is no fear of one's attention being diverted at the last moment when the shot means everything. My desire to be alone is not a question of friendship, but just the fact that if there are two, one may get into the other's way at the crucial moment. The ideal safari is for each to go out in different directions, and to return and compare notes over the camp fire in the evening, the true hour of companionship. During the day the hunter wants no companionship other than his hunting boys.

Our subsequent arrangements suited me perfectly. My friend went after lions, while I took John and Wangie after buffalo.

Wangie normally worked on a coffee farm. He was a Kikuyu boy, a good spoorer, but he had neither the courage nor grit of my famous André. His trouble was that he was a dusky Don Juan.

He was a typical "old soldier," ready to try on anything if he thought he could get away with it. These sophisticated Nairobi boys, spoilt by town life, are all like that.

One evening he came to me obviously in real trouble, pleading earnestly for a month's wages

in advance. Seeing I was adamant to the usual excuses he poured out his tale of woe.

He had been paying unlawful attention to one of the many wives of his Chief, doubtless subtly encouraged by that astute old gentleman, who had laid in wait for him after the true manner of Susanna and the elders.

I found it difficult to refrain from bursting out laughing as with doleful appealing gesture, poor Wangie explained to me that he had literally been taken in sin, by the Chief himself and one of his councillors—a frame-up as complete as any arranged in our more unscrupulous Western cities.

Wangie's tribe was moving with the times. A generation or even a few years ago, the punishment would have been death, instantaneously or by some slow and dreadful torture. But times change. The Chief had many wives, but never could he have too many cattle.

Wangie had been hauled before the Board of Correction, found guilty, and fined five cows, which meant all that he had, and then some more.

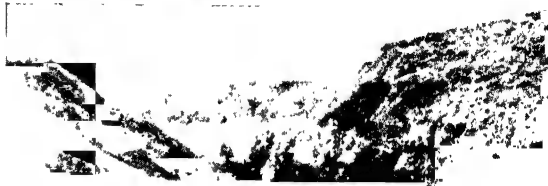
I suspect the fine was levied to an amount that befitted a boy who worked for a white Bwana. Possibly Wangie had been getting too prosperous through his contact with many safaris. The dusky syren in question might have known that.

Anyhow, Wangie was in a mess. Curiously enough, on the day that he was fined the price of native cattle in his area doubled itself. It would seem that the East has little to learn from the West.

An hour's walk through the bush brought us to the entrance of Hell's Gate. We had passed several hartebeest—surely the ungainliest of all African antelope—zebra, and also a few eland, and once or twice saw giraffe poking their weird



*Lady McMillan
with brood mare
and foal*



Hell's Gate



*" Marvellously
camouflaged
against the
undergrowth "*

Giraffe



*Temporary
hunting camp,
Rift Valley*



*"Coffee coloured,
skin clad, bangles
and rings—bent
forward under
heavy loads..."*

Kikuyu women



Kikuyu boy

*In camp for
the night,
Rift Valley*



looking heads through the tops of trees, their bodies marvellously camouflaged against the undergrowth. At the neck of the entrance, great bush-covered craggy mountain sides reared themselves precipitously hundreds and hundreds of feet towards the sky. As we pushed our way, the gorge became narrower, until it was barely one hundred yards wide—further on was only a tiny stream, flanked by high thorn trees. At varying heights on the steep sides of this enormous ravine the surface gave out boiling masses of steam and gases. We followed up the bed of the little stream, now only a trickle, passing a good deal of spoor, some of rhino. Not until we had gone a considerable distance did we find fresh marks of buffalo, showing where they had crossed the stream and moved towards the cliff sides.

If I had any doubts before of the mountaineering ability of buffalo they were dispelled now. At the bottom of the cliff we saw where they had started to scramble up the steep narrow winding bush-covered trail. They must have had the agility of moorland sheep.

It took us a strenuous hour to reach the top. By the spoor, the animals appeared to have a good start on us. For another hour we followed them, and then as we came to the edge of one of those innumerable serrations, we espied dark objects walking in single file disappearing into the bush on the far side of the valley—perhaps half a mile away. My glasses showed immediately they were buffalo.

In this part buffalo have an evil reputation for being exceedingly savage, as they have been harried a good deal by native and other hunters. Wangie said they were "*baya sana*" (very bad).

Wangie suggested that we should hurry to the

head of the valley, run across the top, and try to get to the next ravine by the time the animals arrived there.

We scrambled up that valley side, rushed across the top for perhaps a mile or so, until we came to the head of "a very steep serration," its bush-covered sides two or three hundred feet deep. Breathless, we pulled up behind a large overhanging rock and waited a few minutes. What was that noise coming from below us? Yes, it was a branch or two being broken. Silently we crept along the hillside, peering down into the bush.

Wangie, who knew the country, was in front. He pulled up suddenly and pointed wildly below. I was at his side in a flash. Below us, partly screened by bush, was a small herd of them—perhaps a dozen. I sat down to pick a good head—but the wind must have shifted, for suddenly, they took alarm, snorted and wheeled round. Quickly selecting one head I fired. The animal dropped. The rest immediately stampeded into the bush and, heavily screened by this, commenced to climb up the opposite side of the face. It was not until they were nearly at the top that a fair sized bull showed himself and offered a broadside shot. I hit him in the shoulder. Uttering a roar he sprang into the air and crashed down the hillside, turning over and over like an enormous boulder, smashing bush and undergrowth beneath him, until he finally landed quite dead at the bottom of the valley.

I guessed the difficulty of finding, and getting up to buffalo in this extremely hard country, and now that we had found them I was not for letting them escape easily, so leaving the two dead ones where they were, we rushed down the hillside and scrambled up the steep slope opposite. The spoor

led up to the top of the escarpment. What a hunt! How many miles we went, through this dense country, and how many ravines we clambered up and down I have no idea. Twice our quarry winded us and crashed off into the bush with us following relentlessly and breathlessly on their heels.

Early in the afternoon we came up with them again, standing motionless, almost hidden in the covert. I could just see one shoulder, but we were tired and far from home, and could not follow much further. I tried the shot. The animal I fired at, together with the herd, stampeded, and yet I felt sure of my shot. Wangie slithered up a tree like a cat. Suddenly there was a crash and the sound of much breaking of undergrowth fifty yards ahead of us.

I looked at Wangie—he was pointing in the direction of the noise, grinning from ear to ear. “Dio, dio,—Bwana,” he kept saying. I asked John, standing serenely at my side, what Wangie was saying.

“He says the buffalo is dead, Bwana.” The crashing went on. “Are you sure?” I asked, “Yes—Bwana—he can see him kicking,” was the paradoxical answer.

I told Wangie to come down—and pressed ahead very warily. Although I was sure of my shot I had an unwholesome regard for buffalo, especially here where they had so bad a reputation.

Suddenly a cough a few yards ahead petrified us like stone. I could just see something move through the undergrowth, and slightly altering my position, spotted a portion of the animal's head as he lay on his side, perhaps ten yards away. One shot finished the job. We went up to him to find the first shot had been a little low. It was a lung

shot, fatal enough, but not one that usually kills at once. We cut off his tail and hurried back to the other two, whose tails we also procured. Next morning we retrieved three good heads.

One adventure we had is worth recording; it shows the amazing vitality of a wounded buffalo. I had been hunting one morning on the mountain sides, when far away I heard the distant report of several rifle shots. It could not be my friend, as he was down in the plains looking for lion. The shots sounded high up on the escarpment. After wondering what it all meant I dismissed the matter from my mind. I had a blank day, could find no spoor, and returned to camp early in time for lunch.

Later we went into the gorge and amused ourselves by looking at the great jets of steam and gases hissing out of the earth's sides. Suddenly coming down the defile appeared a white man followed by a native. He proved to be a young white sportsman, whom we both knew. He was acting as hunter to an Indian, and told us a story of having come on to a small herd of five lone bulls during the morning. They had eventually killed one and wounded another. These were the shots I had heard.

The wounded bull apparently had charged them once, but they had escaped by throwing themselves over a steep rock. We enquired where the Indian was. He had retired to his tent—not liking the idea of wounded buffalo. However, neither did we care for a wounded animal being left about in the country in which we were hunting. Our young hunter was quite candid. He had had a bad experience a few weeks previously. whilst hunting with a friend. They had been charged with almost fatal results by a buffalo they

had wounded. He openly said he was frightened of them, for although he was a magnificent spoorer, and was as active as a cat, he was not a confident shot.

A lone bull was too good to miss. We offered to try and get him. My companion said he would come. I suggested he was married—but I fear he forgot all about that—nothing would prevent him. The hunter gave us a grateful look. He was really a splendid sportsman and hated the idea of leaving a wounded animal behind; and yet he had the courage to admit that at the moment he had lost some of the nerve he once possessed. I could understand so well how he felt, and admired him all the more for his candour. Up the gorge we went for a mile, and then climbed up the rise to the left through scrub brush, and followed along the side of the escarpment for perhaps another mile. Here we came to the spot where they had left the buffalo.

John was with me. We looked at each other without speaking. There was a good spoor. We followed for some distance along the trail, and came to a place with a few bushes trampled down, and a good deal of blood. Our quarry had obviously lain down. As some hours had elapsed since he was wounded, it looked a hopeful sign. Probably he was stiff, but nevertheless he was a lone bull, and therefore old and cunning. He might be dangerous. Twice we passed where he had stopped and rested, until we arrived at a short steep rise, over which we could not see. It was dead ground. The spoor led straight up the bank—it seemed probable that if he stopped again it would be just over the top. The nervous tension of such moments is beyond belief.

We crawled upwards. I stopped half-way up to

test the wind yet again by letting dust fly from my fingers. There appeared to be no wind, but over the other side the buffalo either winded or heard us. There was suddenly a terrific crash above us. Galvanised into action we gripped our rifles. Someone in the party jumped back. I anticipated the animal charging down the slope, but he never came. Afterwards I realised that what was dead ground to us was the same to him, and he could not see us. Had he done so it would have been a very different story. He would have surely come straight at us and caught us in a most awkward position. As it was, unseen, though only fifteen yards away, he crashed across our front. We quickly clambered to the top and followed the trail for several hundred yards, till we came to a sharp decline.

It is a most difficult thing to follow spoor, which entails keeping one's eyes on the ground, and at the same time looking ahead to espy the quarry you are seeking.

With eyes on the ground, I happened to be in front and was just about to descend the decline, when I received a violent tap on the shoulder. The faithful John was pointing ahead at a huge pair of horns appearing through the bush. The animal was twenty-five yards away. I could see a pair of ears, but no head. There was no time to think. He was about to charge. An extremely lucky shot from the little .275 arrived in the right spot, and down he went with a bullet just below the boss.

It really was amazing luck. Had I descended the donga I must have been charged, and the odds would have been very much on the side of the buffalo, in this thick bush.

Even now, we approached cautiously—but he

was dead all right. On examination we found this animal had been hit no less than seven times—six times in the rump or flank, whilst one bullet had broken his front leg low down. Every shot was from a .450.

Yet one hears about the stopping powers of a heavy gun. This only went to prove to me more and more the truth of the sayings of Major Bell and Capt. Brocklehurst, that a correct shot from a small rifle was worth infinitely more than an incorrect shot from a big rifle. Notwithstanding the fact that this animal had been hit seven times he was still full of fight and highly dangerous.

He proved to be a fine old bull, with a splendid boss and a spread of over forty-five inches. We cut off the head and took it back to camp. Later on the Indian sportsman responsible for at least some of the seven hits came and claimed it. No doubt it now adorns one of his rooms. Good luck to him!—but I take off my hat to his white hunter—a brave and most accomplished sportsman. There is no one I would rather hunt with.

My friend grew coffee. Incidentally, for those who don't know, Kenya coffee is the best in the world.

One evening after dinner the conversation switched round suddenly to lions. My host was crazy about them, and he had only to suggest that I should come to a place he knew was full of them, for me to agree to accompany him.

Early next day we loaded up his lorry with the usual stores, and took John and Wangie perched precariously on the top of the many packages.

We went by Limuru, down the escarpment, past Hell's Gate and across the great plain, full of game, to the Quarantine Station, past great herds of cattle and goats guarded by tall, skin-clad Masai.

Our road took us past the volcano Suswa and up over the very rough Mau escarpment on to the Naroc Road. The track was abominable. We rode like parched peas on a drum, our heads connecting with the roof at every bump. Behind, the boys hung on like grim death, but grinning amiably. It was good for the liver, anyway—and all fun. Then we turned left off the track and drove across country through alternate bush and plain towards the Tanganyika frontier.

Finally we arrived at an Indian "duka" kept by an old man—a Sikh called Bissim Singh, late of the Indian Army. Around the duka were several Masai huts. Bissim told us there were lions in the district.

We made camp and hunted here for several days. Night after night lions roared round us, but although we hunted all day and used every artifice we knew at night, we had no success. However, I had a good opportunity of studying these Masai, for we were in the midst of their reserve.

The Masai claim the distinction of never having been conquered by white or black men. The whites controlled them by diplomacy, and they were allotted two large countries for settlement in Kenya and Tanganyika.

Their boast of never having been beaten by a black tribe may be far-fetched, for it is well known that once they were nearly wiped out by the Kikuyu. Many stories are told about the wonderful fighting and hunting ability of the Masai in years

gone by. I wonder how many of these are due to their wild and romantic appearance. In looks they are unique in Africa.

They are credited with being marvellous lion-hunters, perhaps they are. Personally I had very little use for the few Masai hunting boys I had—but then I used them for buffalo. I found none who could compare with André or with the Zulu boy Simon far away to the south. But two or three swallows do not make a summer, any more than the few Masai boys of my acquaintance make the Masai tribe. I may have formed a wrong impression. They are purely nomadic and roam the country in tribes, entirely at the dictation of their herds, their movements being governed by the proximity of feed and water. Masai do not drink water, but the cattle do, and so the tribe follows the cattle.

The people live almost entirely on milk mixed with blood, which they obtain from the arteries of their living cattle by means of a small arrow. On rare occasions they are said to eat meat, and recently, through a certain amount of inter-breeding with the Kikuyu, a small proportion consume mealie meal. They do not wash, but anoint themselves with oil. Their hair is covered with red ochre, and their sole dress is a small skin. They literally live for their cattle, on them, and with them. They have no permanent villages, merely erecting the most crazy huts of mud and manure as circumstances dictate. The cattle are driven nightly into thorn bush enclosures as a protection from lions.

The Masai probably own more cattle than any tribe in Africa. When cattle are worth anything their wealth in sterling must be considerable. But money means nothing to these people. The

number of cattle is the all-important thing. The same applies to every other tribe I met. A man is big or small according to his wealth in quantity of animals. Cattle are hoarded as any miser hoards gold. They will not sell or barter them unless forced to do so, and therefore are of little economic value to the country.

Speaking broadly they are essentially a lazy lot. Through the intervention of white people, they now live in the security of their reserve unmolested by incursions from other tribes or slave runners. Instead of being the war-like tribe they were, they are now becoming indolent. A great many escape the poll-tax. It might be far wiser to make these people work and improve the communications throughout this wild country, and so help to pay for some of the protection under which they now thrive and increase.

The women wear skins, but in addition surround their necks with many concentric rings of copper or iron wire, which stand out almost like a ruff. They encase their arms and legs with many metal armlets and anklets—that must seem almost a penance. But they are never taken off.

A Masai woman's life is not a pleasant one. As an unmarried girl she is the pleasure of the warriors, her only solace being the number of rings she is entitled to wear. Married she will collect many more. When she has had children she reaches the height of her fame, but soon sinks into slovenly unattractiveness, free from men perhaps, but never from work.

The Masai man does little. Up to the time he enters the lists of warriors, he attends to the cattle. Once qualified as a fighting man he does nothing but walk about with a long spear and a shield of buffalo hide. As a warrior he may not marry, but

*The first job on
return to camp
Gun cleaning*



*Camp at Hell's
Gate*



*Wangie
skinning buffalo
tail*

*The end of a
dangerous
lone bull—
45-inch
spread*





*Packing up camp
Two fine heads*



Teaching two Masai to shoot



Masai herdsman



*Kenya Coffee
"Shamba"*

*Note ridges to
minimise
erosion*

after so many years' service he becomes an elder and can take as many wives as he can afford.

The Masai take a most intelligent interest in the camp of a white man, particularly if the latter is hunting. We were warmly greeted by most of the women and young girls of the Manyatta, while their menfolk stood by leaning on long sticks or spears.

One night as we were sitting round our camp fire, Bissim Singh brought to us a very old, dirty and toothless man whom he said was very rich, owning five thousand head of cattle. During our stay, I was able to watch this old man. He spent the entire day sitting outside his hut, just moving round to escape the sun, otherwise he did nothing. He was the Chief of the tribe.

As we sat over our camp fire at night, a succession of young Masai lads would appear out of the darkness and sit down on their haunches, warming their hands on the other side of the blaze. Weird figures they looked, each clad in a scanty skin, the flames lighting up their oily bodies and ochred hair. We questioned them about lions.

According to them lions were always quite "near," but this word in the language of the Masai would seem to have an indefinite meaning.

Sometimes when we gave them and the women small ornaments, beads and sweets, they would fight over them.

One evening the old Chief paid us a great compliment. He approached at the head of a troop of women and solemnly paraded them in a row in front of us. From a toothless old hag on the right, every conceivable age was represented—old women, middle-aged, and quite young girls, all be-ringed at the neck, arms and ankles. They were his seventeen wives. At his bidding they

sang a droning chant to us, danced a little, and went away joyfully after we had given them some sweets and beads. I often wondered how the old Chief looked after his wives! I expect he had as much trouble as does the aged Royal in the forests of Scotland during the fall, fighting off the younger stags in their efforts to steal his hinds.

CHAPTER XIX

"To Every Man upon this Earth——"

OVER our Christmas dinner in Nairobi we made plans to go on one last safari before I pushed on northwards to the Nile, where I intended to make a dash through the Sudd and thence to Khartoum.

This was really to be my last safari. Reluctantly I had quite made up my mind. We left at dawn on December twenty-eighth, travelling through the K'Dong Valley to Naroc, a hundred miles away.

Sixty miles further on, close to the Amala River, on the Tanganyika frontier, we picked up two promising-looking Masai hunting boys from a small encampment in the middle of a large, open expanse of plain, liberally covered with gazelles, hartebeest and zebra. These boys led us over to the far side of the plain, to a partially dried-up river, heavily overgrown with dense vegetation, thick scrub and tall thorn trees. Beyond rose bush-covered hills.

While the others were making a camp and washing off the dirt and grime, the inevitable stains of African travel, John and I slipped away to get meat for the camp. I wanted an excuse to have a glance round the country before dark. It looked tip-top game land to me.

This was soon evident. The bush was full of game, obviously drawing down from the hills to drink in the water holes as dusk fell. Magnificent eland bulls, wildebeest, zebra, hartebeest, impala

and gazelle appeared on all sides. Partridges and guinea-fowl abounded. The upper air seemed full of vultures, monkeys clambered and sprang chattering about in the trees.

But I was looking for another kind of game. John found fresh lion spoor at the drinking place, and a little later something which elated me far more than any champagne—unmistakable evidence of a big herd of buffalo.

After dinner we fetched the Masai boys to our fire. Poor John and Wangie; it was obvious by the way they hung reproachfully in the rear that they felt slighted. But this was not their country. These Masai boys were virtually at home.

“Wapi simba, nyati?” “Where are the lions and the buffaloes?” we asked. The boys turned to each other and began chirruping like a pair of sparrows. After a while they answered there were a lot of lions, but there would be more when the rains came. One boy knew where to find rhino not far away.

I pressed them about the nyati (buffalo). Again that secret conversation, which produced the answer that there were hundreds of buffalo, but they were very fierce. “Baya, baya sana—Bad, very bad.”

Ignoring the downcast look that came over both of these Masai faces, I decided to go after buffalo next morning. Starting off shortly after dawn, we found the hyenas had cleared every vestige of meat off my friend's lion bait, put down the night before. We pushed on until we came upon a pool with a wide sandy shore, with plenty of buffalo spoor. Two miles further on trailing across stretches of bush country, spotted with patches of brown grass a few inches high, we found completely fresh rhino spoor mixed up with that

of the buffalo. Here was indeed a puzzle. Were the buffalo ahead of the rhino, or *vice versa*, or were they together? Neither the Masai nor our boys could solve the riddle.

The last thing I wanted to do was to run into the rhino, principally because they would disturb the buffalo. Incidentally I had not a licence to shoot rhino. They are capricious, annoying creatures, who intensely dislike the smell of human beings, and inevitably charge up-wind to get above the smell they dislike. If you happen to be in the way it is unpleasant. Fortunately their sight is not very good.

We followed on through the bush, knowing that our mixed quarry could not be far in front. Suddenly the leading Masai boy pulled up. Some fifteen yards away to the right were five rhino, two bulls, two cows and a calf.

I stopped, nonplussed as to what to do. With their enormous, bulbous bodies on short barrel-like legs, and a great horn jutting out from thickly wrinkled ugly faces, they looked like prehistoric monsters. The rhino's forehead is singularly small and sloping back, his eyes are small and beady.

Our proximity must have unnerved the animals. All of them suddenly began trotting restlessly backwards and forwards in the small clearing, avoiding the bushes growing at intervals with remarkable adroitness.

I had been told this was the danger signal.

What would happen next? I was ready for anything. But here once more I was up against a new experience, and one that seemed to be super-charged with uncombatable danger.

Suddenly, as if in answer to a command of some invisible power, the beasts stopped. They had got our wind! Without more ado one of the old bulls

came straight at us hurling his two tons as fast as any charging buffalo.

My friend banged away with his heavy .500, the animal turned slightly and came straight on. He did not seem to be hurt in the least. Realising how much might depend on it, I hurriedly let him have one just behind the shoulder from the little .275. He squealed, and rolled over like a great pig, and then scrambling agilely to his feet, charged into the bushes like a high-speed tank, shrieking shrilly. We followed, found him resting, and soon dispatched him.

To me the odd thing about this was the way this rhino behaved. I thought that my friend had missed him, as the animal had not taken the slightest notice of the shot delivered from about ten yards. My .275 bullet had pierced the lung. He had aimed at the head. Eventually I found a wound, and on probing it, discovered the base of the bullet two and a half inches beneath the hide, embedded in the bone. The .500 had hit the wrong place in the head, and had had no effect.

This only went further to prove to me that, unless an animal such as a rhino, elephant, or buffalo, is hit in the vital spot, very little damage is done to it; but that hit in the right place, a little rifle such as a .275 will kill just as easily as a far heavier weapon. No bullet, however large, can do much damage unless it hits the correct spot.

We spent most of the morning cutting off the horns and a portion of the hide. The carcase we left as a lion bait, for which purpose the Masai informed me it was excellent. Incidentally the rhino's horn is really a growth, and I am told, highly treasured in the East, where it is used as a tonic for failing vitality.



Oryx



! to man, beast and bird

A water pan in sun-scorched bush

A good right and left



"Wangie's Lady"



Navoc

The next night we had a special dinner to celebrate our hunt—during the course of the day my friend had bagged his first buffalo—and because it was New Year's eve. We drank each other's healths for 1933 to the notes of Big Ben striking midnight. The natives, accustomed in some small measure to the ways of the white man, were flabbergasted at this marvellous box which emitted what to them must have been weird and wonderful music.

Before turning in we made our plans for the following day, and again decided to separate, my friend to go for his lions and I to spoor my buffalo. The local name for him was m'bogo, but to me he was always to be nyati. I decided to go down the river, for I had during the evening seen the spoor of two animals which looked like very old lone bulls.

We both of us left before dawn. I took John and one Masai boy, Wangie and the other going with the lion hunter. It had been raining during the night and the grass and bushes were soaking wet. The soft ground was excellent for spooring.

We made our way down the heavily over-grown river bed. In the small clearings were game of all descriptions, as if they were loth to leave their moisture laden feed. Overhead the trees were packed with vultures and hawks; they seemed to have collected in bigger numbers than ever since our arrival, probably attracted by my companion's numerous lion baits.

A few hundred yards further on was a waterhole, and there, deeply impressed in the sand, were the biggest slot marks of buffalo I had ever seen. There were only two animals and they were obviously lone bulls—not very far ahead. I looked at John. He smiled back at me—knowingly. The Masai boy looked glum and serious.

As usual the trail led away from the river bed, up through the dense bush into the foothills, over soft ground that enabled us to follow swiftly and silently along the heavily overhung and narrow game trail. We went for perhaps an hour, occasionally crossing small clearings of grass in this dense jungle, with rain drops shining on the trees like ice crystals. And so we proceeded, until on rounding a dense piece of bush, across one of these small places, about forty yards away, were the two largest buffalo it has ever been my good fortune to see—two mighty fellows!

They were turned from us, moving away browsing on the rain-soaked grass. The enormous sweep of their horns, the light slate-grey colour of their skins, and the almost total absence of hair on their huge thick bodies told me they were of extreme age; a pair of magnificent animals.

Gripped again in that devastating excitement which seizes the hunter when he comes across his quarry, I slipped forward the safety catch and sat back on my haunches just clear of the bush. The boys sat motionless beside me, John as composed as he always was, the Masai with an expression on his face not unlike a frightened but plucky dog.

The two animals were facing away from me

SKETCH No. 1.

Shows the trail of the two lone bulls through thick bush into the clearing where we first saw them. The clearing was about 40 yards across.

Points J. A. M. show positions of John, myself and the Masai boy respectively, immediately before shot.

Points B₁ and B₂ represent positions of the buffaloes, one standing almost behind the other with their heads turned away.

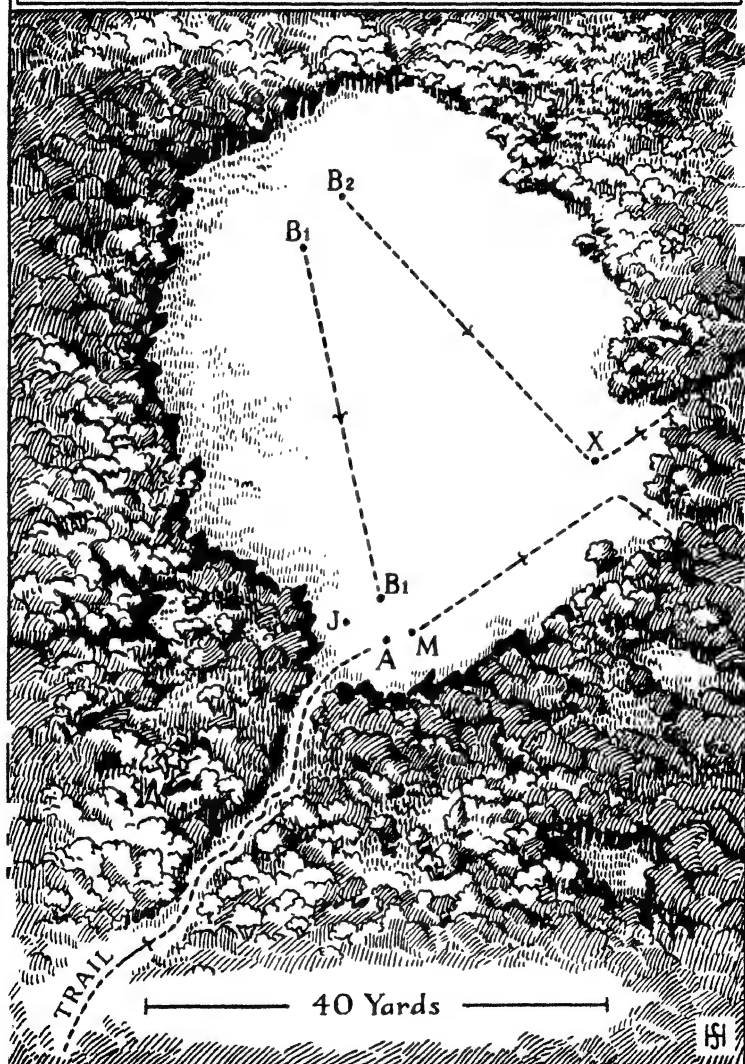
After the shot, B₁ with a bullet in his heart is depicted charging us and shows where he ultimately fell.

The Masai is shown (M) running away with the unwounded bull (B₂) cutting him off.

X is the position where B₂ was hit when just on the boy, and from where he turned off into the bush.



SKETCH MAP 1



[For explanation see footnote on opposite page.]

heading towards the bush. In a minute they might be in the bush ; I could not get a vital shot at either in their present position, unless they turned. Not on any account would I lose them ; neither would I break the rules of the game, never to shoot without being sure of killing.

I knew these animals were lone bulls, which are invariably of great age. They live separate from the herd, either alone or with one or two other animals similarly situated. I knew too that lone bulls are savage and bad-tempered to an astonishing degree. Why they should have to leave the herds has never been solved, but it is possible that their great age renders them useless for breeding purposes, and they leave voluntarily. Here were two magnificent specimens.

I took one of those risky chances which are irresistible. I uttered a quick sharp whistle. The sound electrified the two beasts into action. They snorted with alarm, and whipped round, their great heads raised facing across our front, one majestic bull almost covering the other. A never to be forgotten sight.

I could not get a good head shot, so chose the heart, and fired.

Now, as everyone knows, an animal shot in the heart does not always drop immediately. So it happened this time. The bull seemed untouched, but instead of charging across our front or away from us, he wheeled round and came straight at us. I fired again—I don't know where I hit him, but I knew he would fall soon—but he still came on—at an astounding speed.

And then the utterly unexpected ! The Masai boy who had been paralysed with fear bolted screaming like a devil. To my utter amazement and concern the other bull, a colossal creature,

unwounded and unfired at, suddenly put down his head and thundered after the foolhardy Masai boy fleeing madly across the open to what now seemed to be certain death.

Here was a hell of a situation—demanding quick thinking—one buffalo charging straight at one with two bullets in him was bad enough, but two was a desperate business.

I could not see the second animal properly behind the one that was coming for me. (Remember all this happened in a space of seconds, crammed into the time usually needed for the intake of breath.) The unwounded bull was close on the heels of the Masai boy screened by the wounded one that was almost on top of me now. Escape seemed impossible.

I fired, and hit the second animal high in the withers, the only spot of which I even got a glimpse. I have a vision now of his great form stumbling, of seeing him turn off the Masai and crash into the bush—and of nothing more, other than being thrown to the ground by cool-headed John, and of a great mass crashing three yards from us.

It was the first bull!

We picked ourselves up. I was weak with excitement. John looked at me with an expression which clearly said that here was adventure enough to last him a life-time. The narrowness of our escape called for no words between white man and black.

Recovered, but still cautious, we went to the dead bull. The first shot had made a hole right through the heart. The second one, also a fatal one, had hit him high up, almost bang in the centre of the chest; yet even that hadn't stopped him. This was a perfect example of the nerves

still working in an animal to all intents and purposes quite dead.

What a magnificent bull he was! There was hardly any hair on him, and his tail was a miserable specimen—both signs pointing to his great age. If there was any further doubt on this point, his boss and horns proved it. The thick deep boss was solid and gnarled with years, with both sides completely joined up across the forehead. The ends of each horn were worn down and quite hollow. The spread of this old stager's horns was forty-seven inches.

And then I remembered the other bull which I knew to be even bigger, and the Masai boy who had run away; and it was thus I was to make the greatest mistake of my life.

If that wretched Masai boy had not run away I should probably have been able to kill the second bull. For the first time when hunting I really lost my temper, and cursed the reappearing fugitive as only an angry man knows how. John, more controlled than I, merely showed his contempt for the miscreant. In my stupid rage I told this boy he should have something to be really frightened of, and that we were going off to get this wounded buffalo, and before even reflecting on my rash words, we were hard on the trail of a good blood spoor and the hoof marks clearly indented in the soft, damp soil.

Now, really, I had hunted buffalo long enough to have known better. I must have been crazy, yet I knew full well the danger of following a wounded lone bull alone into that dense bush accompanied only by two native boys, one of whom was in the last state of "nerves." But when we are angry we do things that we would not dream of attempting under saner conditions. I was in no mood

to be sane. My nerves had been strung up. I had very nearly been killed by a stupid boy, and the experience had left its mark on my temperament.

What I really ought to have done was to have gone back to camp, collected my friend when he returned from his lions, and set off again with Wangie and John. This interval might have at least put the animal off his guard. His wound would have stiffened—he might be even lying down, and I should have had the advantage of two rifles.

It is easy to be wise afterwards. At that moment I was headstrong to the degree of imprudence. I had no fear of these buffalo—this I may say was pure conceit. I went on in a most foul mood. For one thing I was peeved. This was the first time I had ever wounded an animal, and it was up to me not to leave so dangerous a beast loose in the bush, and my pride made me want to do the job alone. It is easy to lose one's temper in Africa.

I found myself literally charging incautiously through the bush with the solemn-faced natives following in subdued silence: a rotten exhibition on my part!

The animal was moving quickly, leaving a trail of blood, which made it easy to follow. I had never come across a trail so easy as this I was rashly following. We went on at top speed without a single check. My blood was up. Annoyance wore off at each step, to be replaced by that unbelievable exhilaration of the chase. By this time I was the hunter again, walking on tip-toe with bent knees, sensitive to the slightest crackle of the bush.

Sometimes the trail lay through grass waist

high, and through passages that the beast had smashed through the densest bush. Later, it began to bend outwards in a wide sweeping arc. Caution was returning. I stopped several times to test the wind, and found that following the inevitable rule of a wounded buffalo, he was going down-wind.

The bush was getting thicker, so thick that one could not see more than a foot or two into its inky depths. The curving of the spoor suddenly gave me the first stab of fear. It increased suddenly as I realised what was happening. The wily old warrior was coming round in a wide circle. Eventually he would arrive back on his old trail. How many times had he been hunted? There he would wait, hidden in the bush, motionless as a statue, as unnoticeable as a dead tree, probably in a spot close to the track. And he would be waiting for us! He would let us pass and then charge from behind.

I went on now with mixed feelings. At every step or two I kept looking over my shoulder,

SKETCH No. 2.

Shows trail to the clearing. The second buffalo having been hit and turned from the Masai boy has entered the bush at X.

A. Represents myself. John and the Masai following.

A₁ and B₁ are the relative positions of self and the wounded buffalo (estimated position) three-quarters of an hour afterwards.

Soon after the point Y, i.e. at A₂ I realized that the spoor of B was bending and I expected a charge from behind at any moment.

N.B.—The position of Y was not determined until later when we had recrossed the old trail.

Actually B₂ was probably the position of the buffalo when we were at A₂.

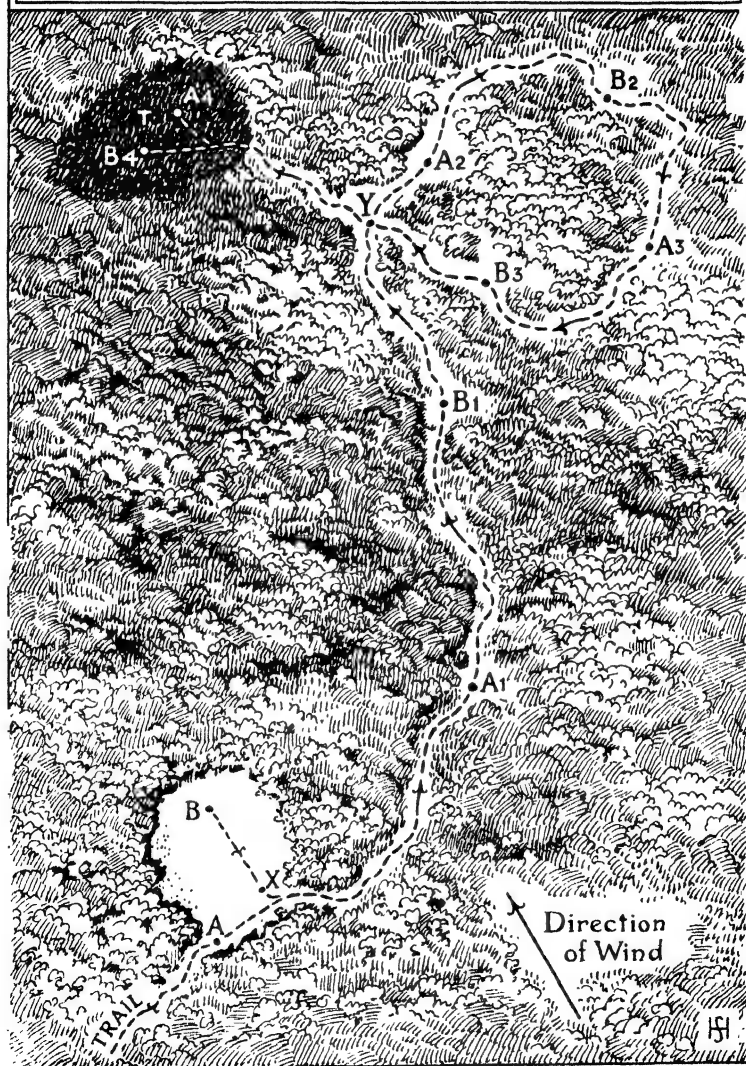
Half an hour later I knew we must have come round 270° and that we were so close behind the animal that we had passed Y the first time before he would reach it a second time. There was, therefore, no immediate danger of a charge from behind. A₃ and B₃ probable positions.

Y is the point where he crossed the old trail, with us following after close behind.

Half an hour later. T the dense thicket to the left of the trail from where the final charge took place at a distance of ten yards. A₄, B₄, selves and buffalo.



SKETCH MAP 2



[For explanation see footnote on opposite page.]

ready to spring round at the slightest sound. By this time the tension was awful. I was becoming really afraid, well knowing what I was up against. Once I pulled up and hesitated. Escape seemed sweet, but I remembered how I had cursed that wretched Masai boy for running away. *I* could not turn back.

Forcing such weak thoughts out of my mind, now in a state of high fever, and replacing them with the recollection that this was the best bull I had ever seen, I pushed on.

The track continued to circle more and more in a right-handed direction, until I calculated that we had come round at least 270 degrees. Then with a strange exultation I realised we were so close behind the buffalo that we had passed the point where he would reach the old trail long before he would ever get there a second time.

I whispered this to John.

"Dio Bwana," he answered. I swear he was white to the lips.

The animal was still going, and we followed much more confidently. At least we should not get a charge on the flank yet. We crossed the old trail. Half a mile further on we came to a patch of bush so strong and so thick that it appeared almost opaque.

To follow the trail through it we had to double up on our knees—a fearsome, terrifying job. We crept on for a while, until something made me pull up. Something told me he was here. I sensed it. But where was he exactly, and how near?

I "knew" he ought to be in front of me and half left.

And I "knew" he was there. Something was going to happen.

John, brave as ever, crawled up to me on one side, and the Masai boy laid his trembling length beside mine. For five minutes we lay there scarcely daring to breathe. We could hear nothing, see nothing but I felt sure he was there, waiting to charge.

How long we endured the terrifying brooding silence I cannot say. I decided I had had an attack of nerves. The only thing to do was to go on. Inwardly reproaching myself for having given way to this strange fear, I lifted one knee and began to get up.

John, doing the same thing, gave a low nervous cough as if clearing his throat.

All at once there was an ear-splitting crashing of the bush, so near that it seemed on top of me ; but I could see nothing, until the trees not five yards away began to crash with a deafening strident crackle.

And John bolted ! I jumped to my feet, but before I was properly balanced, the unhappy Masai boy, turning to follow John, cannoned against me and sprawled me on all fours.

Swamped, and almost paralysed with shock and fear, I saw the thing come at me. I had a vivid glimpse of a great nose stretched low down almost scraping the ground, a row of big square teeth, and a great boss and horns laid back against a long outstretched neck.

I saw, too, a wicked pair of eyes blazing with hatred and venom. God ! what venom there was in that creature's eyes !

In this, which seemed my last second alive I could hear the angry hiss of his breath almost against my face.

I had no time to rise. With a lucky effort I managed to force my rifle against his mouth, and

fired. The bullet merely pierced his jaw, only adding to his fury as he crashed over me. I felt that I had been hit by a battering ram. Somewhere in my body a bone had snapped. I rolled over a little dazed, still conscious enough to see him behind turning with the agility of a polo pony.

In a trice he was on me again, the great boss scouring the ground, his head bent low over his great hooves. A terrific smash on my shoulder, and he was over me again. What part of him had hit me I cannot say. I was surprised to be alive after this second onslaught, and was all at once incredibly cool. (I ask you to believe that I am setting down my actual emotions without embellishment.)

With the daylight shadowed out by the hulk of the great monster, his feet stamping and milling around me constantly pulping my leg, an idea suddenly came to me.

The only chance I had was to try and keep underneath him and thus avoid being battered to death by his terrible boss. In a flash I caught one of his hind legs with both hands and hugged it like grim death.

The fight went on! He paused as if puzzled, and then whipped round on his hind quarters. As he did so, I pulled myself right under him. His stomach was forcing down my back. I could just feel my now senseless leg trailing behind me. . . . He stopped as if puzzled, and then he began to twist round and round again, never uttering a sound. Once he swung me from underneath him and turned his head round, with the idea of sweeping his great horns into me. I clung tighter to that leg. It was like trying to hang on to a steam punch.

Once he shook me off completely, sending me

rolling and scrawling across the mud. In the next second he had charged . . . ripped open the lower part of my back with his horn, leaving a sickening pain. I grappled for the leg and gathered myself in; only to be flung clear again. I tried to move, but the bottom half of my body seemed to be flapping loose, as if it were merely attached to, but no longer controlled by the top part.

I saw him coming again, his wounded jaw dripping blood, his front quarters smeared with gore. I was thinking it must now be Kismet! I remember saying quite quietly to him—"For God's sake make a good shot this time, man"—and turned my head away, flattening myself into the ground as much as I could.

Again a sickening crash. My right shoulder and arm got it.

Again I reached out for his leg, and got it. To counter this he went down on his knees. God! He was going to roll on me. I hugged myself close into him, waiting. I was quite free from pain now, my brain clearly directing my operations. I was now no longer frightened, so busy was I in trying to keep at close quarters.

Then he seemingly changed his mind, heaved his great body up, and went off into the bush, never getting off his front knees. He seemed to be pushing himself like a plough crashing everything in front of him.

I held fast. Sometimes he stopped to stamp on me with his free leg, once he turned and ripped open my other leg. By this time I was completely naked except for one sock, my clothes having been torn off by stumps and bushes.

We must have gone for a hundred yards like this. Then, with one gigantic movement of his

hind leg he flicked me off and barged away into the bush.

I lay there still breathing, incredibly broken, bruised, gashed; and then all at once came a joyous but despairing hope. He had gone!

But no! He had merely gone to get a better run. After a few yards, he turned, down went his head, and on he came again like an express train. (A wounded buffalo does not leave its victim.)

This was the end. "Finish it this time," I whispered. Again I lay flat on the ground, turning my face away, and listening with an odd detachment to the thunder of his approaching hooves. Ugh! I felt the terrific jar across my back and groaned. He stopped straddled across my body.

I seemed to be trying to get up, perhaps with some vain hope of escape, when I found to my utter dismay that I was completely paralysed below the waist. (This was probably the blow which smashed my pelvis.) I could only use my left hand at this time, and much as I struggled I could not keep my legs underneath him any more, so he twisted his head round and began to gore them again. I did not feel anything.

I was scheming how I could get underneath him, when he broke away again and charged. Surely this was the end! I hoped so! I could move no more, being literally broken to pieces, paralysed and winded; nothing about me would work except my mind, which was not in the least frightened at the prospect of death. Nothing mattered.

Another charge which turned me over without hurting, and he stopped. I came to a fleet moment of consciousness to find him on top of me with one knee on my chest. And then the

pain was really awful. Everything was being crushed out of me! Life itself was going. I suppose I gave one last convulsive wriggle, for the knee slipped off and there I was looking up at him between his two legs. I'll swear now that the savage old fighter was puzzled what to do with me then. But I, myself, was finished. I had no more fight left. I wanted this to end in the only possible way, and quickly.

But—as I was turning my strained eyes, a running figure appeared twenty-five yards away. I saw him through the buffalo's hind legs. My God! the faithful John had come back to look for his master.

He had been looking for my rifle and had found it. To my astonishment—and suddenly I was alive again, alive enough to be astonished—my tormenter left me to set off to chase my gallant boy.

But instead of running away, John tore back to me, and rushing past with the buffalo close on his flying heels, he dropped my rifle at my side.

The only part of me that would move was my left forearm. I knew I had only one cartridge in the unused left barrel. (John could neither use nor load the rifle.)

In a second the buffalo crashed past me like a thunderbolt in pursuit of John. Only by a miracle he did not stamp me out of existence. My chance had gone! He would kill my boy, and then come back and finish me at his leisure.

But I had reckoned without John. When the animal was but a yard or two from him, he stopped, side-stepped, and came heading back towards me like a hare. A masterly move!

Just as the animal came abreast of me—I shall never know how I did it—I pointed the rifle

with my left hand and fired, with the muzzle almost touching his head.

Then, I was dead, all but my brain. Quite dimly I saw the great blurred grey mass collapse, turn a complete somersault, and come to rest like a great landslide—quite still. John and I had won.

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I came back to consciousness to find John on his knees beside me! The brave fellow was shaking all over, in a terrible state of distress. If ever it is possible for a native's face to turn white, here was the nearest approach.

I looked at him stupidly. What had happened? Again I seemed only a mind in a completely useless body. Slowly my brain began to clear, as it mastered the coma in which I had sunk: and as recollection came it brought with it a terrible pain.

All through that battering fight nothing had seemed to hurt, with the exception of the comparatively dull feeling of those terrific jars when the animal struck me.

Even when I had seen him rip up my left leg with the point of his horn I had watched it, wondering why I could feel no pain. Maybe the shock of an earlier impact had paralysed the nerves, or perhaps the brain becomes dominantly active in one's fight for life . . .

Now it was a very different matter. I was a head attached to an excruciating agony.

I remember the Masai boy—the cause of all the trouble—had returned. He had been up a tree like a monkey. In response to John's calls he approached furtively dodging from bush to bush, as if he was not quite certain whether the danger was over or not.

Between them they tried to move me. I was really in a mess. Everything about me seemed to be broken, and I was smothered in blood, the buffalo's all over my face, and my own everywhere else: and this as well as mud. I was like hippo after wallowing in a hole.

Lying there, I began to realise the extreme gravity of the position. I did not know how much I was hurt. I could not bear being even touched. I was about a hundred and seventy miles from the nearest hospital, and I was in a place where no car could get to me.

Seriously, it looked as if I was just as near going out as when the buffalo was doing his best to pound me into small pieces. Eventually, I decided I must make some kind of a bid for it, instead of lying down and dying. I felt like that.

Summoning all my strength, I made the boys cut down a young tree and strip another of bark. This they used as a rope, and with it they bound me to the first. After an agonising half hour, still naked, and crusted with mud and blood, they lifted me, one end on each shoulder, and we set off.

I could not bear very much by this time, and made them put me down every few hundred yards. Thus we went on for several miles, with a broiling sun now high in the heavens. Oddly enough, I remembered it was New Year's Day! Here was a nice beginning of 1933.

Eventually, after an indescribable journey, we reached some blessed level ground, and John decided to send the Masai boy to the camp for help.

CHAPTER XX

Good Samaritans

WHEN they set me on the ground and took away the pole, I knew the greatest relief of the day. There is no need for me to dilate on the agony of that journey. Fortunately, the good things of life stand out in memory, and the worst are mercifully dulled. I have no description for the pain of that journey. I retained consciousness only by a supreme effort of will, in order to observe where the boys were taking me.

I remember now that they laid me on some high ground, and that the intense heat of the sun began to scorch my battered and bleeding self to frying point; that mosquitoes and flies flocked to form pirouetting clouds that added to my misery; that I was unutterably parched, and still not quite certain whether this was a dream on the other side of life or not. Only the pain was too earthly.

John went into the bush and came back with some brush wood, explaining that he was going to build a shelter round me to keep off the sun. I could hardly bear to be alone. While he was away, a sudden crashing in the bush on the other side of the little clearing added the acutest agony of anxiety to my plight.

Had he disturbed another herd of buffalo? The crashing was followed by a drumming of hooves, as a herd of animals burst from the bush, and charged across the clearing. I moved my

head, and brought on myself a most incredible pain, and then relapsed exhausted, but satisfied. They were only zebra, who had been resting in the bush during the heat of the day!

Every now and then John came back to busy himself with his building. I lay back trying to think. I wasn't dead, but how long could I live under these conditions? I found myself asking that question quite unconcernedly, and sure enough, in the sky, I seemed to read the answer. The vultures had seen me! First, high up in the blue, I saw an ever-widening circle of minute dots; then they began to sprinkle themselves out, and one by one float down with an astounding speed, to land on the branches of the nearby trees.

I lay still, conscious of a strange tightening in the lungs. The pain of that last body blow was making breathing difficult. Presently, first one and then another of the sinister birds flopped silently to the ground. For a while they stood cautiously aside, like members of some solemn assembly of hooded monks; then they began to close in on me, with little short hops, pausing at the end of each to stretch out their wrinkled necks as if anticipating the feast. Oddly enough, in spite of my pain, I began to laugh. It was funny to be able to cheat them. When the nearest was within a few yards, I let out a shout. There was a flutter of wings and away they went—but only a short distance, to sit in the trees again—and to wait. They had seen dying animals kick before. They could afford to wait. I suppose they knew the result would be the same.

Even the arrival of John did not completely dispel their hopes. Some of them moved to trees farther away, and newcomers continued their swift descent out of the sky.

While John completed his little hut, with that introspective curiosity so strong in all of us, I tried to find out just how bad I was. My arms, shoulders and legs refused to move at all. I knew that my pelvis had been smashed. I remembered the blow that did it, but I was not prepared for the shock of finding the femur had been driven clean out of its socket. Its end was protruding through the flesh!—not a pleasant sight. This gave me the gravest doubts as to what the doctors would say if they ever got hold of me.

John settled himself down to wait with me. He may have shared my doubts that the Masai boy would let us down again. Perhaps the idiot would not find his way back to the camp? Anything might happen with a native who had lost his nerve as this one had, but John never mentioned such fears. Occasionally he spoke to me in low tones, always regarding me with grave, grief-stricken concern. I had never realised before exactly how faithful and devoted a native could be. Here was certainly one of the most loyal and the bravest of them all. My feelings can only be imagined. I owed all the life I had left to this devoted boy, who had risked his life to save mine. If I was going out, I wanted to be sure of being able to make some lasting recognition for him.

One has no recollection of time under these conditions, but eventually, when I had given up all hope of anything happening, and was fighting desperately not to fall into a drowsiness that was numbing my sensibilities, there came the drone of a car engine. The Masai boy had been in luck. He had actually run across my friend in the course of his lion hunt, and the van had got to me earlier than if he had had to go back to camp.

I am afraid I must have looked a horrible sight for them, but this was no time for being bashful. After more time than it takes to describe, and with more pain than I care even to think about, they lifted me into the van, laid me on a blanket, and drove me slowly back across country to camp.

Here they tried to patch me up as best they could with their limited means. It was not possible to do much in the way of first aid, as I was so thickly mud-caked. I distinctly begged them, however, to empty as much hydrogen peroxide as possible over the major wounds—to prevent them becoming poisoned—the constant threat of the bush.

It was then decided to take me to Naroc, where there was a district commissioner and a telephone. The journey was long, and correspondingly awful. I shall give you no details, except to say that the only sound part of me, my head, was pillowed in John's lap. I fear that I raved and yelled with pain. Once as John soothed me with his hand, he bent over saying tenderly:

"Bwana, you will not die, for I have asked God to make you live again, so that once more we can hunt together. You will live, Bwana."

This simple faith is an example of just how much Christianity can mean to a native.

I arrived at Naroc unconscious. I learnt afterwards that the telephone wire was down. It usually is in Africa when it is required. But such a little thing did not defeat that very able District Commissioner. He despatched a native runner with a message to the nearest point where it worked, many miles away, and decided that if anything was to be done for me, I would have to be taken the hundred and thirty miles to Nairobi by aeroplane.

The next question was a real problem. No aeroplane could possibly land in the thickly-wooded bush at Naroc. But, while I was lying awake through what naturally seemed a hell of a night, a hundred speedily mustered native boys were clearing several hundred yards of the bush a mile or so away from where I lay, to make a possible landing stage for the aeroplane.

No aerodrome was surely ever made more rapidly.

Next morning a Puss Moth, piloted by Captain Wheeler of Wilson's Airways, landed on the clearing. Again I was lifted into the lorry, still feeling very much a head attached to a few aching, useless bones. There was a new agony ahead. Being doubled up to be put in the back of a closed-in Puss Moth in my stiffened state was rather like trying to put a six foot pole of nerves into a hat box. It hurt—I screamed quite a bit!

My first thought as the engine started was that I should have to get out again, unless they could be persuaded to take the machine to pieces round me. I became interested as we began to taxi along, following a long line of boys standing in a chain, to show where the ground had been levelled.

My own weight against the seat hurt me enormously, and I was greatly relieved when the machine touched the ground for the last time, rose over the bush, turning and steadily mounting.

I had always wanted to see the Great Rift Valley from the air. It made a marvellous sight even to my tortured eyes. I took stock of the enormously wide depressions, flanked by tier after tier of majestic escarpments. I could even see game on the plains—tiny dots below me—would I ever see them again?—I wondered. But my

interest flagged after the first wonder, and pain returned. We flew right over the top of the mist-capped Suswa, and so on to Nairobi Aerodrome.

To my utter amazement and disgust, a really large crowd had arrived. The news had leaked out.

Wheeler knew how I felt. As we circled round, he leant back to reassure me.

"Now don't worry," he said. "I hope to land you so gently that you won't even know we're there." He did. I owe him a lasting debt.

I hope the crowd of sensation seekers were duly rewarded. They certainly heard a good exhibition of screaming as I was taken out of the machine. I had to go through the same business of being bent up, and it hurt more.

More pain; the sight of curious faces pressing in, faces mumbling confused words; pressmen demanding an interview; an ambulance; the Maia Carberry Nursing Home; morphia and blessed unconsciousness.

I spent four months in the Nursing Home, where I had three operations. The first, which was, I believe, attended by all the doctors for miles around, was, according to the doctor, under whose care I was eventually restored to shape and health, more of a carpenter's job than a surgeon's. They very skilfully took out the broken pelvis and pieced it together with wire, something after the manner we use in repairing a tea-cup, or a valuable piece of china.

Nearly every doctor in Nairobi, whether I was his patient or not, came to see me and wasted much valuable time talking to me. Chief amongst these

was Doctor McCalden, whose kindness I shall never forget.

And then the dozens of other people who came to see me! Never a day passed without several visitors. There was nothing I could not have, nothing they would not do for me during those very long and weary days. And, finally, Lady MacMillan, that lady who has done so much for Kenya, and who has been so kind to many of its inhabitants—the interest she took in my case was far beyond the ordinary. Hardly a day passed in all those four months when she did not visit me, and how many special dishes, boxes of fruit or flowers she sent me, I have no idea, but every day there was something. No one on earth could have found a greater friend.

Four months of a great deal of pain, but they were, nevertheless, some of the happiest of my life, and this was entirely due to the kindness of the staff and the inhabitants of Nairobi. I was spoilt by the Matron and every Sister, and it was undoubtedly due to their nursing, and the great skill of Dr. Anderson, that I did not die.

No caller could be more regular or more anxious than John. Each day, neat and clean as the proverbial pin, his smiling face would appear round the door, as some other visitor had left. Always he had some cheery news for the invalid. He had got that buffalo's head as a trophy; he had cleaned the car; he had belaboured the Masai boy; and he was looking forward to our next hunting trip together. "The Bwana was better." John always hoped and thought that. I had not the courage to tell him I might never hunt again; but in some small way I made arrangements that John shall never want.

The great day arrived—great for the kindly

hospital folk who had made a man again out of a wreck, but one tinged with genuine regret by the wreck himself, erect on crutches.

I got to the boat train to find the usual pack of people seeing friends off home. My friend, the doctor, had said only a few minutes before that I had made a wonderful recovery. I appreciated that, and knew that at times I had been a somewhat naughty patient. He had told me a little sorrowfully that I might never walk again. Everybody thought that; but there was one person who had decided otherwise.

That thought came to me as the train pulled out, a mass of fluttering handkerchiefs. The last impression I had was of the tear-stained face of "old" John, faithful to the last, weeping and smiling, waving good-bye, with a smart new hat on his head.

"Never mind, John," I thought. "We'll hunt again together—one day."

But could we? The doctor had said I might never walk on these stiffened legs again. Never is a long time. Alone almost for the first time since I had met that crafty old buffalo, I threw my crutches on the seat opposite, peered round, almost guiltily, to see that no one was looking, stood up and jumped up, to land sharply on the toes of both feet. Ugh! There was a sharp crack, a vast amount of pain—and to-day I am walking.

Yes, John, we will hunt again!

CHAPTER XXI

Sundown

IN the damp sweltering heat of an afternoon late in April the *Llanstephan Castle* gently steamed out of Kilindini harbour and turned her nose into the deep blue of the Indian Ocean, en route for Suez, the Mediterranean and England.

For a long time I leaned on my crutches, gazing out at the African coast gradually disappearing into the distance. The setting sun was lighting up that wide dark green belt of tropical growth that fringes the shore, whilst behind on the far horizon rose the great blue mountains, clearly silhouetted against the sky.

As the red orb of the sun disappeared behind the mountains, and threw great blood-red streamers high up into the zenith, to bid me a lingering good-night, I hobbled to the after end of the ship, and looked out over the wash. I was loth to say farewell to this great country that had bitten so deeply into my life. Suddenly an impulse came to me. I cast my crutches overboard, and watched them disappear in the maelstrom of the whirling waters. They were native made, and perhaps would return to their native shore. What memories ! What thoughts ! I could bear it no longer. I turned to go, and then, remembering I had no crutches, began to stagger ridiculously. Some kindly soul helped me painfully to the smoking-room. There my resolution to walk stirred in me afresh.

The ship had a full complement of passengers,

but of a more varied type than travel by the West Coast. Settlers and Government officials from Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Nyassaland ; soldiers on leave, business men, visitors, doctors, big-game hunters, tourists, mixed with a sprinkling from the Union, who were travelling this way as a change from the usual and quicker Madeira route—happy, joyous, carefree.

The ship soon settled down on terms of easy familiarity ; there seemed to be one underlying wish in every brain—the intense desire to get back to England. I was asked repeatedly what were my thoughts ? Here they are !

I had been almost a year in this great Continent, in which time I had travelled thirteen thousand miles, mostly alone, through its gigantic spaces. I had seen great rivers, lakes and waterfalls ; journeyed across vast open plains or bush covered expanses, up and down enormous mountain ranges, over every conceivable type of track and under every condition of weather. I had felt the extremes of heat and cold, dryness and wet. I had hunted and studied animal and bird life in its infinite number and variety, and experienced the thrills of a lone hunter's camp amidst the great solitudes of the bush. I had met and made friends with people of every type, colour and creed, and had become partially acquainted with the political, economic and racial problems which beset the inhabitants of these great colonies. I had experienced joy, adventure, fatigue, excitement, pain.

How could I answer these questions in a few casually spoken words ? I did not attempt it. For the remainder of that long, pleasant, if painful, journey I tried to extract my mind from its chaotic state, and mould it into some semblance of order.

I had finished my long safari through Africa! Had it not been for my accident, I should have gone to the Nile, and attempted the arduous, hazardous journey across the Sudd to Khartoum and Cairo. I knew I had a fair chance of success. I was bitterly disappointed to have failed—but these accidents happen and have to be borne calmly.

Members of the Rand Club at Johannesburg had laid me two wagers: Thirty pounds to ten that I would not get to Nairobi and a hundred to ten that I should not make Cairo. I was reminded of the bet one morning in hospital when a cheque arrived for thirty pounds from the meticulous sportsman. I had at least won one bet at decent odds. The buffalo won the other!

I reviewed the final episode, and found no regrets. For months I had hunted in the undulating, thorn-covered expanses of Portuguese East; down the tsetse fly districts of the Shangani and Gwai Valleys in Southern Rhodesia; amidst the great swampy and dense Saka bush of the Kafue River, or among the thick covered mountains bordering the Chambesi, miles away to the north. Again, in the mosquito infested areas of the bamboo jungles in the Songwe Delta, and, finally, amidst the wide plains and great volcanic escarpments of the Rift Valley. My mind pondered over all the thrilling adventures I had experienced and I considered myself lucky amongst most men.

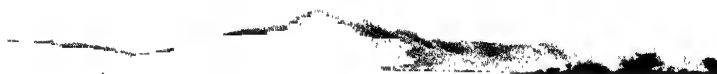
I had taken a risk and paid for it. Probably I shall do the same again. In any case the thought of leaving wounded animals, particularly dangerous ones, is abhorrent.

I recollected a few of the people who had come to see me in hospital. They were so true to human nature. Before, when all was going well,

AFRICA'S GIGANTIC SPACES



The Athi Plains



*Plains and bush-covered escarpments,
Rift Valley*



they were the first to encourage. When Fate took another course, they altered too. "We told you so," they said. "If you will follow wounded animals and use small rifles, what can you expect?" And having delivered these sallies, and smoked many of the patient's cigarettes, they departed, having gratified their curiosity.

I remember so well that no rifle, however big, could have saved me.

I often marvelled why I was alive, and assigned the first reason to pure luck, that despite many charges, I was not struck in a vital spot. I never forgot the bravery and resource of my faithful John, who undoubtedly saved the situation when all hope seemed gone. Finally, although comparatively incidental, it was fortunate I knew something about these animals. It was providence that brought it into my head to try and keep underneath this buffalo, and to lie perfectly still at each charge. I was evidently not meant to die yet.

How often I had been asked why I was so keen on buffalo shooting, why I had shot so many, and was more than once criticised, even called a butcher. Why a man who shoots a dangerous pest like a buffalo should be called a butcher, and a master of hounds who kills fifty brace of comparatively harmless foxes in a year should not, passes my comprehension.

"I would much rather photograph them," they said. "It is much harder and just as dangerous." Bosh! Such statements are usually made by people who haven't the faintest idea of what they are talking about; certainly as far as buffalo are concerned. There is a considerable amount of nonsense talked about the photographing of "dangerous" game, and I lay emphasis on the word "dangerous." The majority of photographs

are taken in game reserves, where the animals are unmolested and unafraid even of motor cars. Indeed, in the Serengeti plains, the lions have been trained to follow baits dragged behind cars, and thus they are photographed or filmed by tourists who want to take back thrills.

But a great many of these pictures are fakes, particularly of buffalo. It is impossible to tame them, and they are rarely seen in the open when the light is sufficiently good for an ordinary exposure. There is a photograph of a buffalo in a well known shop in Nairobi. It is freely sold to those who know nothing about such animals, and was taken by a man well known in the film world, who writes books about his safaris in Africa. "What a marvellous photograph!" people exclaim. The buffalo is standing alone in the open, with no sign of any cover near him. The picture was obviously taken in a good light at a very close range, at a time of day when these animals would be lying down in thick cover, and would never venture into the open. In other words, that photograph is a complete and contemptible fake. A dead buffalo was propped up with poles, the "brave" photographer then took the picture and the printer eliminated the props. And these are the men who in their written word despise shooting.

They have rarely hunted, or even taken photographs alone, for when they go on safari with their camera, they are generally covered by at least one white hunter.

I am entirely against the merciless butchering of antelope and buck by nervous and inexperienced "big game" hunters. Of course, occasionally the animals have to be shot as meat for use in camp. The hunting of buffalo *alone* in thick bush or bamboo is a very different thing.

There are those who have never stalked in Scotland who will decry the sport, screaming the old story that they would rather take photographs. Those who have done it will agree that stalking in Scotland requires a good deal of skill and knowledge. Buffalo hunting requires infinitely more, and in addition, can be a highly dangerous amusement, carried out sometimes under most trying conditions.

In every country, except Kenya and the Sudan, buffalo are regarded as vermin. In many places they are a menace, in others the carriers of tsetse fly, and one is encouraged to shoot them. There is no fear of them becoming exterminated by "butchers" such as myself. Actually, few people are keen on hunting them. The danger and difficulty are too well known despite all the camouflage. Far more of these animals die from rinderpest than are ever shot.

Apparently fashion nowadays dictates that photography in Africa is the correct amusement, so this "dangerous" sport is freely indulged in. Few get hurt and fewer still killed. Tame animals from the Zoos are hired or purchased, and brought into the country; semi-tame ones in game reserves, and even dead ones also play their part. The rules of this "thrilling" modern game are that you photograph as much as possible, write as much as you can on hearsay, and even if you do have to kill a poor animal to photograph it, hush up the matter and publicly dissociate yourself from the "butchers."

Ask a keen fox hunter, pig sticker, or steeple-chaser why he likes his particular hobby. He will probably tell you because it is grand sport. Thinking deeper, he might say it was because it required nerve, fitness and skill, and arriving at

the real reason, say because it involved a risk. Almost all mankind loves to live dangerously.

In the parlance of the crossword experts: Buffalo is a word in seven letters meaning "danger." It can mean nothing else unless you hunt him with a tank, or a regiment of white hunters. He is as crafty and powerful a foe as you can hope to meet in the wild, and you never know what he will do.

In my humble opinion, buffalo hunting, if undertaken alone, is the greatest sport in Africa. To me, it is the most thrilling field sport in the world, a game in which the hunted occasionally turn the tables on the hunter with fatal results. There is a cemetery in Nairobi which ably testifies to the truth of this. Let those who consider going after this game pay it a reminder that mistakes in hunting the bad man of the bush are as fatal as those in flying, only probably the ultimate result is more painful.

There is another side as well. Considerable propaganda exists for the encouragement of agriculture, both by natives and white people. In many place I saw the destruction done to cattle by lions and leopards. In others, elephants, buffaloes or hippos had caused serious damage to crops.

You cannot have crops and big game in the same vicinity, as every genuine settler knows. Cultivation of the land in Africa is beset with enough difficulties without adding more. It is true that when the depredations of big game are reported eventually government hunters are sent to deal with the situation. The taxpayers find the salaries of the hunters, but the settlers or natives have lost their crops or cattle first.

On several occasions, particularly in Rhodesia,

I was often asked, even almost implored to stay with settlers to lend a hand at killing lions. Once I was offered a ranch at a ridiculously low figure. The owner very honestly told me it was hopeless to try and farm, because the buffaloes and hippos ruined all his efforts. One of the biggest estate owners and agriculturalists in Kenya told me he hated the sight of game on account of the loss they caused him. I admit his somewhat heated tirade made me smile, but I could easily sympathise with his view.

Game preservation is necessary, but it can be overdone. In other words the settler sometimes has to pay in loss of crops what the tourist agent gains by attracting visitors to look at game.

All hunters of big game have their particular "pet" amongst the ranks of dangerous animals. Some will give the first place to elephants, others prefer lions or leopards. Discussions and arguments may arise as to which are the most fierce, the most cunning, or the most difficult to hunt. It is all understandable and very interesting, for we all have our likes. The complete study of one of these species requires probably a lifetime. I know enough about buffalo hunting to realise how very little I do know. I tried to study, as well as hunt them, to the exclusion of almost every other form of animal, and to me a buffalo will hold the premier place amongst all African game.

But I had learned much of other things besides sport.

My mind cast back to the Union, with its political and racial and economic problems. I wondered if the day would ever dawn when the people and politicians composing the two races would finally bury the hatchet and work together, not for the good of the party, but for the country.

I could not help feeling that one day there will be a wonderful future for this beautiful country.

I thought of the great fruit-growing districts of the Cape, and the orange and sugar estates further east ; the rivers and rich soil, the great open veldt of the Transvaal, with its sheep and cattle ; and the vast agricultural tracts of the Orange Free State, and the great mines of the Rand.

I could not help thinking that one day, when conditions improve, agriculture will hold its own irrespective of the help it now receives in subsidy, which, in reality, is paid by the gold mines, for these, like the English taxpayer at home, have to shoulder the responsibility for the mistakes of bureaucratic control.

Outside the Rand Mines and the wonderful hospitality of the British people, three things are most noticeable in the Union : (1) the almost insensate race feeling ; (2) the poor white question, and (3) the incredible folly of having remained on the gold standard.

It is possible that the racial feeling in the Union is not caused by British and Dutch, but rather between two political parties of Dutch. The South African party, the leader of whom is a Dutchman, is also comprised of the British-born people. The Nationalist party is composed entirely of Dutch people, and there is a considerable difference of opinion between the leaders of each of these parties. The impression is that the considerable dislike that these two parties have for each other blinds their perspective as to what is right for the country.

The Nationalist party makes every use of the race feeling to incense their often very illiterate and uneducated followers to dislike the English, in order to gain their votes. Everywhere the

Africaans language is encouraged as against English. It is becoming increasingly difficult for any Britisher to obtain a government appointment. School teachers, railwaymen, post office hands, police, customs' officers, and a host of other officials, who increase like parasites under modern so-called democracy, are nearly all Dutchmen. Where will it all end? Surely, no country has missed a man so sorely as the Union does Mr. Cecil Rhodes.

The two political parties have now formed a Coalition Government, and it is to be hoped that some good will be forthcoming, although it will take some time to eradicate the intense feeling that exists between the two factions. One cannot get away from the impression that suspicion exists. The word "slim" has a very significant meaning in the Union.

Another problem of the Union is rarely mentioned outside its borders, but it is an exceedingly grave one which can surely have only one solution, namely sterilization and determined control.

I refer to the poor white question! The majority of these unfortunate creatures are of Dutch origin, with, of course, a considerable amount of native blood. They are a strange khaki colour, with receding foreheads and with many of the outward and visible signs of degeneracy. A great many are illiterate and uneducatable, and live in communities, "native," but without knowing how to live as natives. Decidedly they do not work as well as the native, and so how to employ them profitably remains an unanswerable question. Like all illiterate and degenerate human beings, their birth rate is very high. Each year the problem increases. A visit to a poor white community is one of the most deplorable sights imaginable.

Every leading politician in the Nationalist party adhered to the gold standard, despite the incredible harm it did to the country and in particular to British subjects. Money and people poured out of the country, and despite the warnings of the banks and leading business men, nothing would shift these so-called statesmen from their ignorance until, driven by economic force and bankruptcy, the Union was forced off the gold standard. Here was a clear case of politicians deliberately setting out to ruin a country through spiteful dislike of one another. Perhaps now things may improve, but great suffering has been caused, particularly to people whose income came from England, for it cost them twenty-seven shillings to buy a South African pound.

To sum up. A young man, even though highly skilled in a technical trade, will find it difficult to obtain an appointment. Those, however, who are retired or have a private income can live more comfortably and at less cost than in England, for the climate is ideal and taxation very low. *But*, if you want a job you must make it.

So my mind wandered further north, to the two Rhodesias, those lands of interminable bush and wide expanses, intersected by gigantic rivers. I had gleaned first-hand knowledge of these hard-working settlers, struggling so gallantly to wrest a living from this sun-scorched soil, and having to combat every setback known to man's beast and crop. In common with the rest of Africa can the problem of soil erosion ever be successfully dealt with? Will agriculture ever become successful, or does the future wealth of these "happy" lands rest entirely in gold, copper and other mining?

I doubt if the great mass of the people at home

care one jot as to what is going on in these distant tracts of the Empire.

I was glad to find that, taken as a whole, the Government official in the Rhodesias was sympathetically aware of the many difficulties, and that a good feeling existed between him and the settler. Here, too, there was seemingly no political intrigue.

I was bringing back with me happy memories of the amazing generosity and kindness of these happy, carefree settlers and natives in what seemed to me *the* England of Africa. May it ever flourish.

My thoughts of Tanganyika were bewildered with memories of great lakes, escarpments, wide open plains and snow-topped volcanic mountains—for no more beautiful country can exist. But here one is brought up with a jerk by government officials supplied by a Colonial office from Whitehall. One wonders if the war was fought to encourage British people to settle in a newly acquired district, or whether it was to instal a gang of Oxford accented officials to pander to natives, Indians and Germans, and Leagues of Nations.

These officials, many of them callow and inexperienced, are as numerous and troublesome as mosquitoes. The insects, of course, can be partially defeated by the use of a net. Those who have not visited this mandated territory cannot have the faintest idea of its "official" problem. Its cost to the Colonial Office must be enormous.

From Kenya I carried away the impression one gained at the first entrance—a sunny oasis. With its fertile soil, and beautiful climate, its rains, magnificent views and sport, surely this should be a white man's country, and one wonders

why it has not prospered more than it has. Surely the Almighty in making Africa gave Kenya more than her share of natural benefits.

I shall always think of Kenya as distinct from the other colonies, not only socially, but politically and topographically.

I question myself as to whether the settlement of this Eldorado has not been rushed too quickly, and too vividly exploited. It is really so very young. Definitely, there must be a great and varied future for it.

In each colony through which I passed I found a variety of problems, some individual and others but branches of the main problems that beset the settler all through Africa. Two of them stand out as worthy of mention. Both will undoubtedly play their increasing parts in the development—or otherwise—of these vastly interesting dominions.

Is Central Africa a fit country for the white man and his wife? Can he rear and educate his children there, so that they in their turn can make it their home, and carry on the tradition and custom that he has imparted to the soil that he has made his piece of England? At present there is not much to encourage the settler to keep his children with him. He must send them home, or else attempt to educate them himself, a difficult task for which only the happy few are suited. In the matter of education, distance is the enemy. With townships separated by hundreds of miles, and houses by fifties, the daily school is out of the question.

Now let us consider Central Africa from the woman's point of view. It is still questionable whether the average woman can endure the altitude, and the perpetual sun, without her nerves and health being ultimately impaired. True,

during my expedition I met many charming and noble women carrying on in the best traditions of England, but how long they could exist without their regular visits "home" is a matter of conjecture. Africa may not be a woman's country.

One of the greatest hardships of the settler's life, from the woman's point of view, is the extreme loneliness. Any woman coming fresh from England suddenly finds herself marooned in a lonely spot; probably with only her husband for company. Only time can show whether she will be able to find enough to do to occupy herself without being able to exchange conversation at frequent intervals with friends of her own sex. In her life there will be no up-to-date newspapers, no cinemas, no theatres, no house-parties, no "little dressmakers," and none of that daily round with which married women so aptly and pleasurably fill their time in England.

In Northern Rhodesia a visit to the hairdresser may be an annual occasion. It is all very well for a woman to go out with the intention firmly fixed in her mind that she will work. She will find that the sun makes any kind of physical labour or even sport impossible for her during the greater part of the day. It is far too hot even to pick about in the garden. The evenings, alas! are incredibly short. Woman's hours in Africa are eleven o'clock in the morning, which is tea-time, and sun-down, which is marked by beverages of a stronger quality.

My sympathy is entirely with the women who live in these isolated tracts, shut off from art, music, literature, and out of the stream of ideas which flows so rapidly from one to another at home over the bridge table or at the ever popular cocktail party.

Women do adapt themselves to these conditions, but in my mind there still lingers the impression of a sad yearning for just one week in Britain. Some women are brave in this respect. They endure silently, with smiles on their faces, because their husbands' occupations have dumped them in the wilds, but I sincerely doubt if they are happy. They simply smile and yearn.

Another question that I asked myself on being carried home is whether the climate does affect the growth of white children. I saw few youngsters during my travels, so I gather that those white settlers who can afford to, send their children home for health and education. Time may prove an enlightenment on this subject, but at present the whites do not seem prepared to take the risk.

Australia and Canada have raised and educated children successfully, and thus formed new and virile and acclimatized races that are a credit to the Empire. In this respect Central Africa at the moment cannot hope to compare with these two other dominions. Speaking generally, most of its settlers labour under the broiling sun with the hope of one day returning home. Those who can afford it send their children to England for education. One must not forget, however, that these districts to which I refer are in their infancy. The next twenty years may bring a more permanent and more widespread white settlement, which will effect great and sweeping changes.

These settlers deserve every encouragement and every assistance that our Government can give them. How bitterly some of them must reflect on our untalented frozen credits in Russia, and our loans to other countries, while they are slaving, comparatively unassisted and unnoticed to make this part of the Empire fit to live in.

Another question presents itself, an even more vital one. That is the native problem. So many fallacious views have been aired on this matter; so much well-meaning twaddle has dripped from the pens of the misinformed who plead for equality for the poor natives. It is my opinion that the future of Africa depends largely on the native working under white supervision. In no county in the world is there such a limitless supply of cheap labour, and yet there is an enormous amount of waste. Broadly speaking, the tribes live in vast reserves under so-called white supervision. In these reserves they do little or no work. Curiously enough, one meets with the worst roads in the whole of this continent running through these native reserves. For the privilege of being kept in these reserves, the native is supposed to pay a poll-tax. A great many of them escape this. Further, it is well known that in some districts the money actually collected does not even pay for the salaries of the white officials who are so generously unloaded on Africa by the Colonial Office.

If Africa is to be developed, she must be developed with the help of her own people. The axiom that Satan finds work for idle hands is never more vividly illustrated than in the instance of these native reserves. Natives will work under white supervision; they will work gladly and happily, as has been proved by individual settlers. Considering how much Africa would benefit by an enthusiastic campaign of public works, such as roads and reservoirs, one is tempted to reflect on the reason why this has not been put into practice.

The future of any country depends on its communications. Africa needs roads. My experiences

prove that. Imagine a country which is dependent still on the ox-waggon for any journey that cannot be undertaken by railway. More people than I care to remember told me I was mad to even contemplate attempting to drive a motor car from the Cape to Cairo. As far as I was concerned, the motor car did its work nobly. I think I should have got there if it had not been for my accident. But how much easier I should have got there if there had been any semblance of a decent road.

Would it not be wiser, therefore, to forego the native poll-tax and insist on the natives earning their keep by improving communication and opening up the country? Trade would immediately flow into the Rhodesias if this were done.

There is another aspect of the native question—one which I commend to those who preach the “give - Africa - back - to - the - native” creed. A generation ago most of the tribes were wild, fighting races, who preyed upon each other by pillaging villages and stealing cattle. They had to fight and hunt for their living. Now, under white supervision, they live in idleness, protected from tribal invasion. As the years go by they are becoming soft, degenerate, and diseased. They need work to harden and educate them. In these enlightened days of civilisation we might almost say that work is their right.

Before visiting Africa I had heard stories of the virile propensities of some of these native tribes. Inspection was a disillusionment. On the other hand, I could not help drawing the comparison between these tribes living their lives of idleness in the reserves, and the healthy contentment of those boys working for the white settlers on agriculture, coffee-plantation, orange-

growing, and sundry other jobs to which their activities had been directed. In other words, where the native is concerned, work maketh the man.

I believe that the aeroplane may be the salvation of Africa. Already the London to the Cape air route is being widely used by almost every branch of commerce. Africa is difficult flying country, but it can be made easier. Aviation may solve the problem of the white woman marooned in the wild.

To-day Nairobi is only seven days by air from London, but it is impossible to go from Nairobi to Capetown by rail. Given good fortune, it will take you at least three weeks to do the journey by car. If the weather is bad, you will not get there at all; but you can make the journey by air in four days.

Iringa is four hundred miles from Nairobi. This again takes a good three days by car in dry weather. The orthodox way to do this journey is by train, boat, and car. First you have fifteen hours in the train to Mombasa; then you take the boat to Dar es Salaam; train from there to Dadoma, another fifteen hours, and onwards by car again, the whole journey might take a week. An aeroplane could do the journey comfortably in a few hours, and would never be lacking in passengers.

Finally I wondered if those at home who are responsible for the welfare of our Central African settlements, will ever realize the incredible damage done to local and British trade by the wholesale dumping of Japanese goods. Even as far inland as Iringa the stores were full of cheap Japanese silks, cottons, embroidery, stationery, and Heaven knows what else, to the exclusion of everything

British. Indian competition is bad enough without this Japanese menace. Has the time arrived to exclude any article except of British manufacture?

I felt that if these Colonies had their own governments they would soon deal with the question, as is exemplified by the high tariffs introduced with success by The Union. I formed an opinion that our Central African Colonies would benefit by having their own administration and dispensing with Whitehall.

In our strange form of government, the qualification for the post of Colonial Secretary may vary between having been a successful barrister or a powerful stevedore. Likely enough he has never been to the colonies before. However, on access to office, probably he goes in considerable state, at the taxpayers' expense, to visit one or more portions of Britain overseas. There he meets many officials, attends many dinners and makes an equal number of speeches. But he has not got below the surface, though very few of the millions of English voters will know that.

During the war a distinguished staff officer once said that the function of the staff was to do everything possible to help the rest of the fighting forces engaged in a far more dangerous and arduous task. The same maxim should apply to the Colonial Office with regard to British African settlers. I regret I did not see enough evidence of such an ideal.

So we went on through the arid, desert-bordered Suez Canal, without a shade of green to break the everlasting brown, and finally into the Mediterranean. Africa had vanished, and a strong cold gale arrived immediately to announce Europe.

The northern migration was on. Swallows,

martins, warblers, chiff-chaffs followed us, tiny specks above a rough sea, and clustered round the ship's lights at sunset. I gathered many into my cabin, fed them from a fountain pen filler during the night, and released these brave little adventurers the next morning.

Genoa brought one up with a jerk. Europe, politics, armies, officialdom, unrest—I felt it all and became depressed. The freedom of the wild had gone completely, and this feeling of unrest was increased by the turbulence of the sea and wind all along the French and Spanish coast.

The great Rock of Gibraltar temporarily raised one's pride that despite the League of Nations, Great Britain at least held the key to the Western Mediterranean.

And so through the dreaded Bay, amidst grey skies and cold winds, until one bleak, raw, rainy morning, we steamed slowly up the Thames towards Tilbury.

The sides of the ship were lined by eager passengers, excitedly straining their eyes towards the shore. "England at last!" they exclaimed delightedly. "Grey skies, peaceful and green after the everlasting sun."

The sky was overcast with a great blanket of fog and cloud, and the rain came driving on a chilly wind. I shivered in my mackintosh—donned for the first time for a year—and gazed out moodily at the dismal landscape. My first sight of England was a low, dingy mudbank, and dimly appearing through the haze of fog and rain were endless lengths of wharves, sheds and factories. Chimneys, belching out columns of dense smoke, added their quota to the utter drabness and squalor of the panorama.

In the foreground, a green, choppy sea, speckled

with flotsam and the oil from many craft that ploughed their way up this dreary estuary, amidst a medley of fog signals and hoots—liners, tramps, packet boats, tugs, ferries and barges.

Even the gulls and kittiwakes standing disconsolately on the buoys or wearily following the ships, seemed to reflect the gloom.

I drew my mackintosh more closely around me, for what beauty was there here compared with that far away land of sunshine?

We anchored in mid-stream. The rain still fell pitilessly out of the fog cloud. After an hour a lighter arrived. A long chute was attached from the after end of our ship to the deck of the lighter—to act as an inclined plane.

The luggage and paraphernalia of five hundred passengers slid down the chute. There was no covering from the rain; there would not be, for this was England. For two hours, five hundred passengers watched this imitation of a giant racer, with an endurance and patience that only Britons can show. Some were speculating on what would be broken. Finally, the lighter departed for the shore. An hour more, and another ferry came for the passengers, and we were soon herded on to the tiny deck, penned like so many sheep in the rain.

As we approached the shore some kind person said: "Ah, you must be pleased to have got home after all your experiences?" Was I? I hope he did not read my smile correctly.

My heart was in Africa.

I thought of my faithful André and John, and wondered what they were doing, and longed to be with them again. Involuntarily I found myself mentally telephoning to them, "Good hunting."

Could I be happy returning to the cold, wet,

unromantic drabness of commercial London with such memories? No, alas! I was miserable and terribly unhappy.

The lighter touched the quay. There was a wild scrambling ashore, to seize luggage and rush to the train—a medley of people, porters, barrows and shouts.

The one and only person who knew of my return had met me with a car. We drove our way along slushy, greasy streets, and I gazed vacantly at trams, herds of people, shops and traffic blocks.

“Well, how do you feel?” asked my friend.

I was too puzzled to answer. My mind was horrified at the rush and squalor of modern civilisation as compared with the quiet and glory of the great wide spaces.

After a wash and lunch at a restaurant, I began to feel a little better.

Later in the evening I limped to the steps of Black's. Yes, they were still there, worn by the tread of many feet. I tried to limp up the steps. My old friend, the hall porter, was still in his box. Our eyes met. I read his lips saying: “Well, I'm ——” as he rushed out of his office to help me up. “Glad to see you sir,” he said. “I never thought I should again.” No greater welcome could I have wished. I noticed his curly hair was a little greyer, but otherwise he was just the same.

He took my hat. I kept my stick, and limped in. Yes, it was all the same; the same furniture, pictures and people. I noticed one old friend in a blue suit still asleep in the same chair where I had left him a year ago—perhaps he had not moved.

The bar was in the same place, and equally well attended—moths round the eternal lamp.

I edged quietly in and asked for a drink. The steward checked a hasty ejaculation of surprise—he had been there too long to give vent to his astonishment. He and I were “old contemptibles”—we should talk later.

No one noticed, although I knew most of the moths. One or two of them said: “Hullo, good evening.” I drank, and listened.

The same conversation was in progress—racing, stock exchange and the latest story. Suddenly a very old acquaintance looked across at me and said:

“Hullo, Con, haven’t seen you for a week or two. Been to Newmarket?”

I said “No,” and changed the subject, and asked him to have a drink, which he accepted.

“Have you heard this story?” I enquired, “about the newly married couple?” I had heard it in Africa, it was quite a good one. It went with a swing. No one had heard it. This was a feat. To tell a new story in Black’s is no easy thing.

We had some more drinks. Later on, I went to bed—tired. I realized there are no gaps in the life of a West End Club.

CHAPTER XXII

Big Game Shooting

IN giving the few following hints on shooting in Africa, I do not in the least wish to pose as an expert. They are merely enumerated in the hope that they will be of use to a complete novice. They are opinions definitely formed after a certain amount of personal experience, and after considerable acquaintance of, and conversation with, many well known hunters throughout the continent.

I would advise any person who is going to Africa to shoot for the first time to obtain, and thoroughly read, one or two good books on the subject, and try and learn the habits of some of the animals he is going to hunt. Do not get too many books, otherwise you will become confused. If I were asked to specify which books to get, from the large list that has been published, I would suggest Mr. Percival's *Game Ranger's Note Book*; Capt. Brocklehurst's *Game Animals of the Sudan*; Major Bell's *Wanderings of an Elephant Hunter*; and *Big Game Shooting in Africa*, edited by Major Maydon. All these are splendid books written by men whose names are unsurpassed in African sport. Therein will be found all the information you require.

I would particularly recommend a novice to read, learn and digest every word of the excellent preface with which Capt. Brocklehurst commences his book, and I humbly beg to agree with every

single word he writes. Read one or more of these books before leaving England, or during the journey out to Africa, and after you have attempted a certain amount of hunting read them again. You will appreciate them all the more then!

From the very first moment when you commence hunting, get to learn the different spoor by sight. This isn't easy at the beginning, but if you are anything of a hunter, you will immediately become intensely interested; and if you are really keen, you will soon learn the art from your hunting boy. Watch him all the time, and whenever you are out by yourself, look for tracks and try to follow them up alone. Don't forget that the shot is merely the finishing touch. The spooring is the real sport. Don't ever follow the native blindly; concentrate yourself the whole time, and beyond everything, cultivate the faculty of observation. This is the charm of the whole undertaking.

By sitting up over lion kills or over drinking holes, you can obtain a great deal of knowledge of African wild life. You will see many kinds of animals or birds before the light goes, and again at dawn, and at night you will hear many noises, all of which can be explained by observation. Therein lies the interest.

Learn to move absolutely silently and quickly, and above all, remember it is necessary to be fit otherwise you will never be able to stand a series of long days' hunting, often under a very hot sun. Avoid drinking liquid during the day time. Because of the heat, this habit is apt to increase alarmingly, with dire results. Thirst can be kept at bay by chewing gum, or carrying a straw in one's mouth.

As a rule, there is not much wind in Africa,



*Author in camp,
Eastern Transvaal*



but for all that, there is enough to enable game to scent you, should you be on their wrong side. When you think you are approaching your quarry, stop repeatedly to test the wind, which often varies.

When near to your beast, especially if it be of the dangerous variety, go up to your shot alone; the fewer people about the better. Get as close to it as ever you can, and do not shoot until the animal is so presented that you can see clearly one of the vital spots. Major Bell then suggests you should count ten before firing. It is all so, so true! If you are close up to a lion, or elephant, or buffalo, it is very hard not to feel excited, and the counting of ten, or even more, will give you time to steady yourself. Remember, you want to shoot to kill at your first attempt. The first shot is always the easiest. If you miss or wound, the succeeding shots must naturally be more hurried, and in consequence will generally go high. This is because you will not have taken enough time to lower the foresight sufficiently into the back-sight.

Again, it is sometimes extraordinarily difficult to kill a wounded animal. I have seen, on more than one occasion, a wounded beast hit several times before it ultimately falls. I think this is due to the fact that the first shot temporarily stuns the nerves, and that the succeeding shots are not felt at the moment. When I had my accident with the buffalo, I was not conscious of any real pain until the whole thing was over. Everything seemed paralysed.

Again I implore you, do not shoot at long range. There is no sport whatever in firing at beasts in the open plain. Big game shooting is not target practice. It is a highly accomplished

art of tracking in cover, with the object of getting as close as possible to your animal, and then killing it neatly with one shot. One has heard it said so frequently: "I made a marvellous shot to-day at such and such—it was three hundred yards away." And the speaker seems quite hurt when you do not congratulate him. Long range shooting is not sport; quite the reverse. I do not suppose that one per cent. of the animals fired at at long range are killed. The rest are either missed or wounded, and as such remain in pain, and a menace to other hunters and natives.

Bear in mind always it is not the size of the animal that matters. The vital spots, whether the beast be an elephant or a reedbuck, are very small targets indeed, and unless hit in such places they will go away wounded. The "head-on" shot at a buffalo is a target not more than six inches wide and four inches deep, and a heart shot may be only six inches square. What marksman in the world can be confident of hitting so small an object at three hundred yards range? So please follow your animal into the bush, get right up to him—to within thirty yards, or even less, count your ten before you shoot, and you will kill him effectively with one shot. Then you will return to camp satisfied with yourself at having done the thing in a proper and sporting manner, and you will have thoroughly enjoyed the sport in addition.

Should you wound a dangerous animal, such as a lion or buffalo, and it goes off into the bush, what are you to do? Yes, it is a nice problem. No good sportsman likes leaving a wounded animal behind, but make no mistake about it, following it up, especially if alone, is a highly dangerous occupation. The cemeteries of Central Africa will tell their story if some of the

inscriptions are read. If you are alone, I suspect the odds are about even that it will get you especially if in thick stuff, for it will lie up motionless, will see you before you see it, and will charge from a very short distance at an incredible speed. In that split second deadly accuracy alone will save you. If you can find a reliable white man to accompany you, take him with you as a second gun. In any case, do not follow the beast at once, but give it time for its wound to stiffen, then you may find it off its guard. Dogs are useful, particularly with lions, as they will often find the animal and so give some warning. But the surest safeguard of all is to get close up to your objective in the first place, and never fire until you are absolutely certain of your shot. No good hunter thinks of doing anything else.

The type and size of weapon to be used is a matter of opinion. I prefer a double hammerless ejector to a single-barrelled magazine, because the safety mechanism is easier to work, and also the second shot can be fired more quickly, for you do not have to take the rifle from your shoulder in order to work the bolt, which incidentally makes a noise when withdrawn and reclosed. The magazine rifle, of course, is by far the cheaper and is less in weight.

Probably at least ninety per cent. of hunters prefer a large bored rifle for dangerous game. Major Bell and Capt. Brocklehurst believe in small weapons. For the reasons previously stated in this book, I find myself in complete agreement with these two great hunters, and I could never understand the arguments put forward in favour of the so-called shock effect produced by heavy bullets.

I would strongly recommend those who are

not really proficient in rifle shooting to get to know their weapon, and so be able to use it with confidence. It is no use getting close up to an animal and then feeling doubtful as to whether you can hit it correctly. Carry your rifle yourself, keep handling it, and constantly take aim at various objects as you are going along. When you are in camp, and have a few moments to spare, select a small object and bring the rifle sharply to your shoulder, and try and align it on the selected spot without looking down the sights; then put your cheek down to the stock and see how far off the mark you are. After some practice you will find that your aim is never very far off the spot.

Those of us in the Service who used to be keen on rapid firing and snap shooting competitions, spent many an hour at this exercise, and also at snapping at small objects either inside our rooms or out of doors. You should be able to bring your rifle comfortably in to your shoulder in a flash and find it to be aligned on the object. The process is automatic; the hand, eye and brain should work together. The same principle applies to revolver and shot-gun shooting. It is wiser to bring your ammunition out from England, for that obtained locally may not always be fresh.

Kit is not a difficult question. In a bush country a thick bush coat and corduroy trousers are generally preferred, although some like shorts. In any case, see that the coat is made of strong material, otherwise it will be ripped by thorn trees. There is a lot of thorn in African bush. In an open country, shorts are probably the most comfortable. Personally, I rarely wore socks. They require washing every day, and you soon get used to being without them. Roped or rubber-

soled shoes are the best, but always have two pairs and wear them alternately. This prevents your toes being cramped in the same place continuously.

The speedy treatment of sores and scratches should not be overlooked, or they will quickly fester and veldt sores will result. Remember the sun in Africa is not a healer. Cleanse the places with disinfectant and keep them tied up in damp lint. A "first aid" set is invaluable.

If you do not want to be worried with the arrangements necessary to any safari, and also if you can afford it, then employ a white hunter. There are any amount, especially in Kenya or Tanganyika. If you get a good hunter, you will have nothing to think about. He is sure to have a pet place of his own to take you to, but remember any success obtained is really his, though he will probably be polite enough to tell you the reverse.

By far the cheapest and most satisfactory way is to engage a boy. If you can talk the language there will be no difficulty in finding one. If you do not understand Swahili, or kitchen-Kaffir, then you must get an English-speaking native. They are to be found. In any case employ the boy to interview native chiefs and headmen during your travels, and you will find out a lot of information by this method.

Particularly in Rhodesia get to know some of the settlers, especially the old pioneers, for you will find them to be the salt of the earth, and a great many of the older hands have been hunters themselves. They know the country intimately, and will do anything in their power to help you if they know you are keen. This is my experience, at least. I found the Rhodesian unique in kind-

ness, hospitality and generosity; and into the bargain he is a first class sportsman.

My advice therefore, in short, is this. Engage a boy, make the acquaintance of one or two settlers, find out where to go, and take your boy with you and make him interview the local natives. In the various villages, you will be able to obtain hunting boys, porters, and others who will build your camp, and do everything for you.

This is the routine I carried out, and I rarely had a failure. Follow this, more or less, and whatever success you obtain will be yours. If you are keen you will never have a dull moment. You will learn about animals, birds and nature, and will get to understand native life and customs. You will make many mistakes—of course you will, as everyone has done before, and will continue to do. But to me at least therein lies the charm, the adventure, the uncertainty, the risk; if you are the right type, you will enjoy yourself far more than you can ever imagine.

True sport denotes risk; that is half the joy of life; so remember always that there is a definite risk in hunting dangerous game. Hunt them long enough, you are as certain as anything can be, to have some kind of an adventure. It is only a question of time! On such an occasion the issue will be decided by whoever is the quicker, and whether you can handle your rifle. Your life will often be a question of seconds, and nerve.

By all means take a friend with you for camp fire comfort on safari, but my strong opinion is that it is far better for each to hunt separately. If you go out together, you are certain to be talking when you should be learning and watching and observing everything you can. The quieter you are, the better. There is plenty of time to

talk when you return to camp, and then you will have the pleasure of comparing notes as you sit round that gloriously romantic camp fire in the evenings.

CHAPTER XXIII

Motoring

THE following points, based on my motoring experience in Africa, may prove useful.

Firstly, the car. For reasons already given, I infinitely prefer one of American make. The majority of British cars are not suitably sprung for bad roads, and are built without sufficient clearance; neither are the engines as flexible as those of the American variety. They are also apt to become over-heated. It is to be understood that the horse-power tax in England deters British manufacturers from building high-powered cars at a moderate price, but the fact remains that if they wish to compete with foreign nations in the car trade of the Dominions for *heavy work*, they must radically alter their existing models.

A new and well-known make of English car, driven by a very experienced driver, started from the Cape at about the same time as I did. Before it had arrived in Abercorn it required a complete set of new springs, and a new front member; yet this was a model widely advertised as being suitable for colonial service. These remarks are made with no idea of pessimism or feeling against English cars, but are the result of having gone very carefully into the matter, by observation, and a certain amount of experience.

The car, or rather delivery van, I used, was driven for more than thirteen thousand miles, over

every condition of road and constantly across country. Notwithstanding the fact that chains were used over considerable distances, and first gear had to be resorted to on account of mud or sand, and that the normal load carried was half a ton, it averaged twenty-one miles per gallon throughout the entire distance. Furthermore, my knowledge of a motor is almost nil. Nothing went wrong with the machine, and the water in the radiator never boiled. No car could require a better testimonial. For a long safari such as this, I advise an American car of either a box-bodied or van type, fitted with the biggest and strongest British tyres available, for it does not pay to try and economise by using cheap or light tyres.

Don't overload yourself with spares. You won't need them. Condensers, plugs, coils are the most important, and perhaps a spare spring. My van was fitted with an extra spring in front and behind. Take four good chains, and see that they fit closely, for you'll have to put them on under the worst conditions. A coil of thick rope will be found very useful. A spade is a necessity, and can be tied on the front dumb iron. From my experience with mud, I would suggest taking a few sacks to assist in getting out of morasses.

Wire netting is most helpful when negotiating sand, for it helps to prevent the wheels from becoming embedded. The method of usage is this: A piece is put down on the sand and the car is driven over it; another piece is then laid out and the former taken up and replaced again ahead, and so on until the difficult patch has been negotiated. If the car becomes sunk deep in sand, it will be found very difficult to jack up without a suitable base for the jack, so take a flat piece of board with you. Then, after scraping

away the sand, you can insert the board, which will prove an effective base for the jack.

Petrol is obtainable nowadays nearly everywhere, although, especially in Central Africa, the depots may be a considerable distance apart. It is therefore advisable to carry two spare full tins, and always to fill up the car when passing a store. The price varies with the distance of the depot from the railway station or the port. In many parts of the Union it is less than two shillings a gallon, and in the districts of Rhodesia, which are fed by the railway system, it is around three shillings a gallon. Further north, between Kapiri in Northern Rhodesia and Dodoma in Tanganyika, a distance of thirteen hundred miles, there is no railway, and supplies have to be transported by road, so petrol, in common with everything else between these points, is expensive solely on account of transport charges. It may be as much as seven shillings a gallon.

The roads generally throughout the Union of South Africa, especially in the Orange Free State, are fair, though very few are metalled for any distance.

Entering Rhodesia, the roads become tracks, winding for nearly two thousand miles through thick bush. Coarse grass, sometimes several feet high, grows in the centre of the way, and it is advisable to have the front of the radiator fitted with mosquito wire gauze, to keep out the seeds.

Tyres are apt to get scored by stubs of trees and bush, which grow through the road surface.

The country between the Limpopo and the Zambesi is very hilly, there are many steep escarpments, and the road is very sandy and rough in places. Main communications in Tanganyika are

fairly good, although the country is very mountainous, and several of the gradients are severe.

The worst stretch of the Great North Road is between Arusha and Nairobi. Some of the main roads in Kenya are good, but in Uganda they are considerably better.

The above remarks refer entirely to dry weather, for, providing the surface is hard, it is surprising over what country a car can be driven.

In rain, however, it is another proposition entirely, for owing to there being no metalling on the surface, the whole track becomes a sea of mud within a very short time, and many portions are completely impassable. Do not attempt driving over wet roads unless it is absolutely imperative, for trouble will soon overtake you. It is far wiser to wait for a day and allow the surface to dry up.

Also, unless it is urgent, do not attempt long distances over unknown country at night, for it will be found to be a tiring occupation—and perhaps a terrifying one. You may find yourself ditched a hundred miles from anywhere, with a wait of a week or more before another motorist or even an ox-waggon passes your way.

APPENDIX—ROUTE

Capetown
 Sir Lowry Pass
 Swellendam
 Mossel Bay
 George
 Wilderness
 Knysna
 Kruis River
 Prince Alfred Pass
 Avontour
 Humansdorp
 Gamtoos River
 Uitenhage to Graaff Reinet
 Port Elizabeth
 King Williams Town
 Komgha
 Great Kei River
 Umtata
 Tsitsa River
 Mount Aliff
 Brooke's Nek
 Kokstad
 Ingeli Pass
 Harding
 Ibbi Mountains
 Ixopo
 Richmond
 Umkomaas River
 Durban
 Pietermaritzburg
 Mooi River
 Colenso
 Tugela River
 Ladysmith
 Newcastle
 Volksrust

Standerton
 Johannesburg
 Nelspruit
 Pilgrims Rest
 Malamala
 Sabie
 Portuguese East Africa
 Pretoria
 Pietersburg
 Louis Trichardt
 Wyllies Poort
 Messina
 Beit Bridge
 Limpopo River

SOUTHERN RHODESIA

Gwanda
 Balla Balla
 Bulawayo
 Lupani
 Gwai River
 Shangani River
 Dett
 Mica Hills
 Wankie
 Victoria Falls
 Zambesi River

NORTHERN RHODESIA

Kalomo
 Choma
 Mapanza
 Chitumbi
 Namwala
 Kafue Flats

NORTHERN RHODESIA

—continued.

Mazabuka
 Molyneux Pass
 Kafue River
 Lusaka
 Broken Hill
 Kapiri
 Chewefwe
 Kanona
 M'Pika
 Chambesi River
 Kasama
 Abercorn
 Lake Tanganyika

TANGANYIKA

TERRITORY

M'Beya
 Lake Rukwa
 Songwe Delta
 Livingstone Mountains
 Sao Heights
 Iringa
 Ruaha Plain
 Ruaha River
 Dadoma
 Kondoa Irangi
 Pinaars Height Mountains
 Mount Henang

Babati
 Mount Ufiume
 Great Rift Valley
 Arusha
 Mount Meru
 Mount Kilimanjaro

KENYA COLONY

Longido
 Namanga
 Nairobi
 Thika
 Fort Hall
 Nyeri
 Nanyuki
 Mount Kenya

Limuru
 Naivasha
 Lake Naivasha
 Gilgil
 Nakuru
 Aberdare Mountains

Limuru Escarpment
 Mount Longenot
 Hell's Gate
 Naroc
 Mara
 Amala River

